

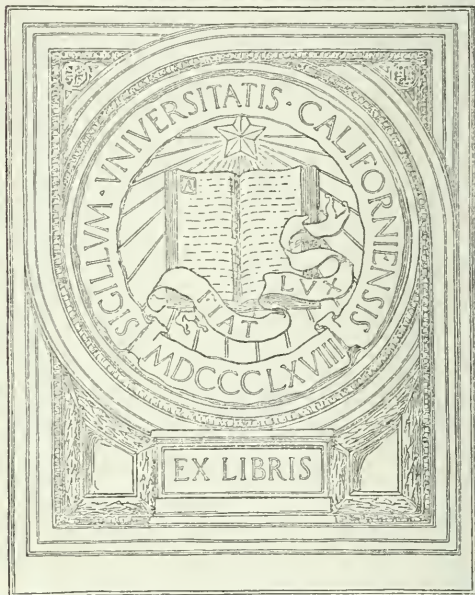
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STANLEY BUXTON;

OR,

THE SCHOOLFELLOWS.

“ While guile is guiltless, and life's business play,
Friendships are formed that never know decay.”

BY

THE AUTHOR OF “ANNALS OF THE PARISH,”
“LAWRIE TODD,” &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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STANLEY BUXTON,

OR

THE SCHOOLFELLOWS.

CHAPTER I.

THE situation of our hero seemed hardly to admit of any increase to his perplexity, and yet how easily might he have extricated himself from the pressure of that ruin which was every day closing upon him, and like a rising tide, threatening to overwhelm him. Whether the equanimity with which he breasted each successive wave, should be ascribed to his native courage, or to that species of fortitude which springs from innate obstinacy, over which the reason exercises no influence, is a question we forbear to answer : indeed we confess ourselves inadequate.

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The firmer a man adheres to his own determinations, the less amiable he becomes in the eyes of his friends, especially of those who advise him to alter his course; and they are in consequence always in some degree offended, when he, the most interested in the effects of his own conduct, should imagine he knows better what he ought to do, than those comfortable and sagacious persons, who only now and then, and but for a moment, recollect his embarrassments. The efficacy of the actual aids and co-operations of friendship to the forlorn and necessitous, cannot be doubted; but it is not so certain that the plausibilities of mere advice are often more valuable than the voice and breath in which they are uttered.

Be this, however, in philosophy as it may, though Buxton maintained an outward seeming that was little affected for some time by the current of his troubled fortunes, still there was ultimately no reason to think that his unexpressed feelings were of easier endurance than those which molest the tranquillity of the common unfortunate. Possibly some sentiment, derived alike from the pride and propriety of his

former station, sustained him in his change. He could not for some time denude himself of the habits with which rank and great affluence had invested him ; but every day they became more impaired, and the leisure for reflection which he possessed, during his quiet residence at Gowans, gradually stripped him of their most unfitting remains.

As he grew sensible to the folly of cherishing notions only suitable in the sphere from which he had fallen, Mr. Ralston remarked that his character underwent some transmutation. Constitutionally calm and moderate in manners, though intense in sensibility, he was rather of a cheerful than a gay temperament, and impulses of extreme vivacity were requisite to rouse him into visible excitement. But from the day he received the communication from Dr. Sorn, he became sedately grave, and was evidently occupied with some secret subject of cogitation. He did not avoid the society of his friend, but he often took long solitary walks, and sometimes in the twilight of the evening he would stray out alone, even when the night was chill, and the skies overcast. On these

occasions, however, he went seldom far from the house, for he found in his own bosom topics which interested him quite as much as the shifting scenery of the season, which furnished, as he alleged, the amusement of his daylight rambles.

When the Laird first observed his mind taking this pensive bias, he was inclined to make some effort to rouse him, but the solidity and justness of judgment which Buxton uniformly displayed, deterred him; and Miss Sibby, to whom he once remarked the alteration with anxiety, advised him to take no notice of it.

“It’s only the disease,” said she, “coming to a head: I have seen such things in others before now, growing out of far less causes, and when it ripens, ye’ll see him a more purpose-like man, if he recovers at all.”

“And if he does not, what then?” cried the Laird.

“He’ll just wither away, grow dowie and actionless beyond the power of medicine, and slip at last out of the world, as one that had neither part nor portion in its affairs.”

“ You draw a melancholy picture, cousin, of what he may become.”

“ I don’t say that his doom is so cast,” replied the lady ; “ but such is the ordinary end of those who are stunned by adversity, and never get the better of the blow.”

One evening, as they were thus conversing at the fire-side, while he was walking by himself in the avenue, an incident occurred which broke in upon his irresolution—irresolution engendered by the indulgence allowed to himself in vague and inconclusive reveries.

It was a cold and cloudy November night, and the north wind blew with fits of violence ; but between the black and scattered wrack, drifting over the face of the heavens, the sapphire of the skies was often seen studded with stars in their clearest brilliancy. Along the western horizon the contour of the hills stood distinctly revealed against a dim, pale glow of the fading twilight ; and the silver cresset of the new moon in the south-west, as the clouds from time to time opened in their passaging, shed a watery beam on the lake and the river, which

as it filtered through the basketed aisles and arches of the leafless boughs sprinkled the walk of the avenue with showers and drops of light.

Buxton, however, was too much occupied with himself to take any interest in the phenomena that were stirring as with life and intention around. In similar circumstances, others, suffering less from the undeserved hostility of fortune, might have been impressed by the aspect and auguries of the time, and their fancies derived prophetic nourishment from the forms, so like omens, that had their being in the shadows and the wind. But to him the visible world afforded no interest. The clouds careered; the fitful breeze, sometimes swelling to a blast, passed unheeded by; and the night was comfortless to the sense, almost as much so as his own rugged and inextricable fortune was to his mind.

In this careless and unremarking mood, he continued to walk to and fro, when, as he passed the old and doddered oak, which stands a few paces in the field beyond the ranks of the beeches of the avenue, he was startled with the wild and frightful screech of an owl which had

long been the tenant of that hollow tree—followed by a shrill feminine cry of terror, and immediately by the vision of two figures, rushing from a seat which had been formed round the trunk, beneath its ancient branches.

The shriek and the apparitional intrusion, disturbed the tenour of his meditation; his humour at the moment did not, however, lean to superstition; and he regarded the accident only as one of those occurrences which require no immediate consideration. Regarding the figures as those of two rustic lovers, he turned back, to allow them to escape their own way, but he had not walked many paces, when he heard them coming close behind towards him.

Being in no humour to speak to them, he stepped aside to let them pass, as they drew near, concluding by this time that they were two of the Laird's servants; but as he glanced his eye back, when a glimpse of the moon broke through the trees, he was surprised to observe that the supposed lovers were two women. He looked again more inquisitively, and discovered that they were strangers, and that one of them was muffled in a mantle: as by this

time they had come within a few paces, he halted ; but before he could methodize his thoughts into any thing like an address, one of them suddenly started forward and seized him by the arm. It was his mother, and her companion was the dejected Miss Julia Sorn, whom his refusal had instigated to a desperate purpose—what then took place, is described in a letter which, by the next post, he wrote to his friend in London.

CHAPTER II.

“Gowans.

“DEAR MR. FRANKS.

“I AM ashamed to write you ; surely these strange mischances which have so darkened the prospects of my life, have equally dimmed my faculties. Never could any man more distinctly feel the nothingness of himself than I do, or be more thoroughly convinced that we are but passive cogs on the wheels of some great machine. My will is as vigorous as ever, its decisions when exerted are as effectual, but the power to exert is no longer mine. I am in the hands of chance till propelled by an impulse, and over that impulse I possess no command.

“For some time the true character of my circumstances has been gradually becoming more

and more distinct ; I see my ruin,—wide as the mind's eye can extend, all around me is as sand and ashes ; and yet I have been fool enough to think that by a more studious survey of its barrenness, I might distinguish something to rest hope upon ; I am mortified at myself, that I should have ever yielded to such weakness.

“ Last night I had reasoned myself into a wiser way of thinking ; I saw before me a vista of what my future course might be. It was dismal enough ; but it was not altogether without inducements to perseverance. I was abroad when this juster estimate was formed, but in the same moment my heart was assailed with an unforeseen occurrence which in the stroke was keener than all I have yet suffered. At the moment when I was about to return into the house—you know the localities—my mother and Miss Sorn intercepted me in the avenue. The meeting was abrupt and unexpected, but the frame of mind into which I had previously wrought myself, withstood the shock without particular emotion.

“ After a few sentences, explanatory of the

recognition, I observed who was her companion; and said with considerable self-possession, 'I cannot doubt the object of this singular visit, but my answer has been already conveyed to the young lady, who does me too much honour by her attachment; I can only repeat it, if it is your or her intention to renew the subject.'

"Surprised, probably, at the firmness with which this was uttered, my mother, without speaking, tenderly seized my hand, and turned round to her companion, who by the moonlight I perceived had a handkerchief at her eyes.

"Accustomed from my earliest years to be ever softened by the blandishments of Mrs. Howard as my nurse—alas! more so formerly than now, when I should respect her as my mother—I was a good deal agitated by her gestures and her grief; nevertheless, with only a slight inflection of the voice, I said,

" 'Refrain from what you have come here to say with that fond girl. It can serve no purpose now.'

" 'I would snatch you from destruction,' was her eager reply. 'Oh, I have never been

aught else than your mother—and, my poor boy! what are you to do now? bred a lord, and turned on the world a beggar.’

“ ‘I beseech you, madam, to repress this vehemence,’ was all the answer I could make. ‘The whirlwind that distracted me has subsided, and I am not afraid to meet the enemy—the fiend, that is the spirit of the world.’

“ ‘But what shall become of your father and me? We are outcasts—far more than you the victims of guile.’

“ ‘Who can answer that?’ was my grieved reply. ‘It was a question that should have been put when you thought of the danger in which, as a babe, you placed me.’

“ ‘But my dearest son,’ said she, after a short pause, ‘though the errors of the past cannot be redeemed, much is still in your power, by which all our misfortunes may be mitigated. Dr. Sorn consents ——’

“ Apprehending what she intended to say, I went immediately towards Miss Sorn, who was standing aloof at some distance, and addressed her with a degree of sternness, that on reflection I cannot excuse to myself; for what greater

proof of regard can man or woman give, than to acknowledge affection so disinterested as that which this unhappy girl has avowed for me?

“ ‘Miss Sorn,’ said I, ‘why do you thus persecute me? I suffer sufficiently already; I do not need the forfeiture of my own esteem to increase the stings of misfortune; and that forfeiture would be incurred, were it possible that I could sink so low as to sell myself for a pittance.’

“The severity with which this was said would, even now, overwhelm me with remorse, but her answer spared the pang. It was uttered in that tone of romance and indescribable silliness which used to amuse me so much in former times;—but I cannot describe the effect it had upon me; nor recall the words in which it was expressed, for they smote me with a sudden and angry aversion, that for a moment overthrew my self-possession. I am ashamed to confess the contempt with which they filled me, and far more, the strength of the instigation, which, like an instantaneous flash, almost made me give vent to my disgust. Fortunately, however, the discipline of education came to my

aid—I dare not say that my will restrained me, but I was enabled to say to my mother, who had come towards us,

“ ‘ You have heard this. Do you wish the woman who could so far forget herself, to be the wife of your son—of me ?’ ”

“ No answer was given, but the—I know not what to call her—burst into sobbing and tears; they had not, however, the proper influence of natural passion, and yet they were so near to almost real grief, that I felt something like a sentiment of contrition: I had gone too far. But the mother’s bosom was bared to her child, and she fell weeping on my shoulder.

“ ‘ It was no thought of mine,’ said she. ‘ God look on us in mercy ! It seemed a way by which we might be saved from desperate poverty. Alas ! my unfortunate boy, even while I undertook to mediate in this business, my own heart upbraided me.’ ”

“ This pathetic exclamation produced an effect not expected; Miss Sorn, rejected by the man she pretended so to adore, hearing this impassioned inadvertency in her own presence, was instantly nettled,—I have no other word

for her girlish pettishness,—and with a toss of attempted indifference, bade us good night. In the very act, however, of doing so, she was seized with an hysterical affection, and shrieked a laugh so like a bedlamite, that although for a moment it was irresistibly ridiculous, I was soon alarmed with awe and dread, believing her senses utterly flown.

“This frantic extravagance was heard in the house, and in the course of less than a minute the inmates, with lights and lamps in their hands, were at the doors and windows. I must, however, say no more, for I find myself incapable of describing a scene which beggars romance, and from which, when I saw the astonishment it had produced, I hastily ran and sought refuge in the adjacent plantation.

“By what insane ecstasy can this weak girl be infatuated! for although no philosopher, I am yet able to discern that there is nothing of true affection about her. The voice of her tenderness is the whine of an actress, and her whole conduct is embued with an affectation, which, instead of awakening pity or regard, inspires a very odious antipathy. I have heard

of men, and of women too, who have actually imagined themselves influenced by feelings which they never felt, the effects of those congestions which excite the fancies of hypochondria. Can Miss Sorn's phrenzy be of this kind? I hope it is. But in the mean time I have determined to encounter nothing again like what I have described, and in consequence will to-morrow set out for Edinburgh; you may therefore expect to see me in London about the end of the week.

“Truly yours,

“STANLEY BUXTON.”

CHAPTER III.

ALTHOUGH our hero has given apparently a circumstantial account of what passed in the avenue, we have been told by the Laird, while looking over the letter with him, that it is but a meagre outline, and conveys no idea of the distress of mind with which his ill-fated guest was overwhelmed.

By the interference of Miss Sibby Ruart, the ladies were urged to enter the house, where, partly by her entreaty, and partly in the hope that Buxton would soon return, they staid at least a couple of hours. But the night growing late, and the moonlight becoming dim and horizontal, they were forced to return to their respective homes in the village, and Mr. Ralston was constrained by the obligations of hospitality, to be their conductor.

When he came back, Miss Sibby was alone, and our hero still abroad. Her patchwork, that beautiful mosaic of calico scraps, her genteel seam for the two preceding winters, lay neglected on the table. The candles unsnuffed had heads like mushrooms. The fire in the grate was ashy, low, red and flameless; and the meditating gentlewoman was bending over it with her feet on the fender, while her thoughts, roving on the frontiers of sleep, were of "such stuff as dreams are made of."

On hearing the Laird's footsteps in the hall, she started up, and snatching the snuffers, was in the act of brightening the lights when he entered the room.

"Dear me," said she, scarcely well awake; "what have I been about to let the candlewicks grow to puddock stools; and what has become of Mr. Buxton that he's still a-field? Well, and did you see them safely lodged?—yon poor lily-lookup, with all her fine style of language, is, I doubt, only in her semplar years, in the way of discretion. But I am, however, none surprised at such forwardness; for we all

know that in England it's the natural part of the women to court the men ; but it's long to the day when a well and soberly brought-up Scotch lassie will so demean herself. Mr. Buxton served her rightly ; and, if I were him, I would let her know that I would be as condumacious as a marble statute if she ever again came singing the auld song of ' John come kiss me now.' It's really no' a christian practice.'

" Hush !" cried Mr. Ralston ; and at that moment Mr. Buxton made his appearance also, at which Miss Sibby, to assure him that nothing was farther from her thoughts than his affairs, said,

" I was just thinking that the Laird would be none the worse of a warm tumbler after his walk ; and I can see, Mr. Buxton, with the half of my one eye, that ye're no' out of the need o't likewise."

The bell was immediately rung, and the necessary orders being given to the servant, the Laird signified by some sign of that natural freemasonry which the members of a family learn among themselves, that he would be glad

were Miss Sibby to leave them. She, however, had her own reasons for not observing the sign ; and he was at last obliged to tell her to *send* the servant with more coals, laying such particular emphasis on the word *send*, that she could not mistake its purport.

Miss Sibby being gone, the fire mended, and the requisite apparatus for an after-supper dialogue set upon the table, the two gentlemen, almost in the same breath, said,

“ This has been a strange incident ! ”

And Mr. Buxton continued,

“ I could not have chosen a more unhappy spot for retirement than this has become ; and you will yourself acknowledge that I but comply with the shape of my fortune, in resolving to return immediately to London. The kind sympathy both of you and our friend Franks, I can never repay. But do not think the less of my gratitude, if, for a time, hereafter I should seem changed in outward demeanour.—I shall not be changed in feeling.”

This was expressed with evident emotion ; followed by a short silence, which the Laird was the first to disturb by observing,

“It is impossible not to think that you have determined prudently; you could not have come to any other place half so annoying; and I would ill convince you of my esteem, were I to urge you to remain. But on your arrival in London, what is your intention?”

“To apply myself earnestly to my profession; and although my father has had the imprudence to address Lord Errington on my behalf, and to have been refused assistance,—I think justly refused, Mr. Ralston,—the case will be different if I make the application to his Lordship myself; and it is my intention to do so. I have no choice, and though perhaps I had begun to suspect the truth before the discovery was made by Lady Errington, I never truly and of my own will did his Lordship any wrong—why then in my helplessness should I hesitate to ask the aid of that friendship which he has himself offered.”

“But if,” said the Laird, thoughtfully, “his Lordship again refuse? for men who are warm and kind in the first moment of obligation,—and the manner in which you surrendered all could not appear to him but noble,—sometimes

soon after cool, and fall under the ordinary influence of their natural character."

"I have thought of that," interrupted our hero, as if the topic had been disagreeable, and one he was not willing to enter upon; adding, "and I must only then embrace my fortune a little more closely. I shall not be the only man that has been thrown on the world unfriended."

"Say not unfriended," replied the kind-hearted Laird, "for though I am not rich, you are free to share what I can afford. It is not much,—indeed it is so little, that I was ashamed to offer it before."

The eyes of Buxton glistened with a watery glance, and when he took the Laird's hand he said,

"Of what should I be afraid, while the world has so many more good men in it than the Cynics would have us believe? No, Mr. Ralston, I will reserve you for a last appeal."

"A last appeal! why so?—why do you say that? Make me the first, and you may need no other."

A considerable pause ensued; the two friends were evidently embarrassed, Mr. Buxton by

the sense of obligation, and the Laird, if the process of his thoughts were revealed in his countenance, by something akin to apprehension and sorrow ; and he said,

“ It is true that you are helpless, Mr. Buxton ; but you have that encouragement in the possession of great talent which few are blessed with. You have no cause to hesitate in entering on the course you have chosen.”

Buxton smiled and replied.

“ You have your fears for me. Come, come, do not think me so much an object of pity. Have I not two friends ? How many men can boast of one that has proved himself equal to either ? But it grows late, and we shall not make matters better by talking of them. My determination is to proceed to London, and if Lord Errington’s generosity fail me, I must do as greater men have done before ; perhaps, however, you may think that by their greatness they had the less to dread.”

“ On that head,” said the Laird, with an air of respect and deference—“ I have no anxiety ; I am but thinking what would be my own condition, were I so cast adrift.”

In a desultory conversation of this kind, they spent some time. On the following day a chaise was ordered from the post-town, the Laird intending to accompany his guest to Edinburgh; but it was at the door some time before Mr. Buxton was apparently ready to embark.

He was evidently detained by some mental consideration, more than by aught he had to do; for although he opened and shut his portmanteau several times, and walked to and fro in his bed-room, swinging the key on his finger, long after the Laird stood ready in the parlour with Miss Sibby, who waited to bid him adieu, he was yet as irresolute as if he had still many things to pack up. At last he overcame the undetermined state of his feelings, his portmanteau was fixed in the carriage, and with the kindest wishes of Miss Sibby, having embarked with his friend, the chaise drove from the house.

When about half way down the avenue, Buxton turned to the Laird, and said,

“Can you imagine what detained me so long? I have been so weak as to doubt whether I should bid my mother farewell. Let us drive

to her sister's. It becomes not me to add to her humiliation."

So saying, the post-boy received his orders, and after stopping for a short time at the Academy-house, the adventurer was again on the road.

CHAPTER IV.

WHATEVER appearance a man in the various changes of his fortunes may happen to present to the world, the world to him always holds the same aspect. From his waxing to the full round, and his waning till the edge becomes invisible, his every phase is but illumination, and comes not from his own native light. Prosperity, however splendid, produces no transmutation on himself; nor does adversity, though it darken, alloy the integrity of his worth. Those, therefore, who do not carefully discriminate between the circumstances comprehensively described in GOOD LUCK, and the qualities of the individual himself, are little aware of the injustice they sometimes commit, and less of the acerbity with which unconsciously

they tend to irritate the excoriations of misfortune.

But let us not in this dogma be misunderstood. We do not contend that mankind are not liable to alteration by the changes of fortune. It has, however, been one of our most painful observations in the course of our pilgrimage to have discerned, that the fading in the fortunes of men is always preceded by some infection of decay in their own faculties, though the consequences may be often long of attracting attention. We have seen the plague spot reddening even amidst the healthiest bloom and the utmost vigour; but, it is the course of Providence. The displeasure of Heaven descended on the prophet before the worm was commissioned to consume the gourd.

It was not, however, so with Stanley Buxton. On his return to London, he felt his stamina undiminished; the blight which entails irremediable adversity had not touched him, nor had the glossy green uncurled leaf of his endowments been scathed by the canker. He was, it is true, as the tree in winter, but his bareness was not barrenness. He could see by

the altered looks of old companions, that he was regarded as fallen, both from his caste in society and his native rank as a man. The soft and quiet propriety which with the investment of his earldom had been so graceful, he saw they thought servile, and that the same modesty in opinion to which nobility had once lent value, was looked down upon as something akin to inferiority. But though for a time he had to wrestle with this harsh conviction, his courage and resolution derived from experience fresh nourishment and strength. It told him what he had to expect and to endure, and taught him that the fortitude by which the step of fortune was to be ascended, must be the offspring of his own energy. One evening, when some incidental occurrence had brought this vividly before him, he made a bound as it were, into a determination, where he fixed himself with a firmness that could not be shaken.

He had parted from Mr. Franks, with the intention of next day addressing himself to Lord Errington, to solicit the friendship which the earl had offered; but in returning to his chambers in the Temple, he had met with a

former acquaintance whom he thought cool and distant in his demeanour. Roused by this circumstance, in which he experienced something like unmerited humiliation, he ruminated for some time, and at last resolved to expose himself to no other slights of the same kind, nor even to seek the means of preserving himself in some show of equality with the ordinary world, by applying to Lord Errington.

To some, a resolution of this kind may look like sullenness—and perhaps it was nearer to it than to independence; but it sprang from the natural result of his circumstances, and the decision of his character: nor did he lose even an hour in carrying the plan he formed in consequence into effect. In the same buildings where he had chosen his chambers, he found an obscure and cheap attic,—he removed immediately into it, and next morning when Mr. Franks called, he was found in this indigent domicile.

Franks, on entering, was startled at the meanness of the apartment, and was on the point of offering some remonstrance, but our hero interrupted him.

“I know what you would say,” cried he;

“but it is now to no purpose. I have placed myself on a level with my natural means; and this is my starting-post in the race I have to run.”

The tone in which this was said, precluded all reply; and Mr. Franks pensively took a chair beside him, in expectation that he would make some farther remark, but he remained silent.

After a pause of several minutes, Mr. Franks then said,

“I have been apprehensive that it would come to this, but still thought the difficulties it entails would have had influence sufficient to prevent you; I request no explanation of the cause, perhaps I can guess something of it; but I beg you will tell me how you now intend to proceed.”

“As becomes me; the first thing is to find the means of subsistence. You start; why should that surprise you?”

“But how?”

“I have ten fingers and a head. Literature is the very element in which my profession has its being—my first step is to find a bookseller

who will employ me. In this, can you assist me?"

"I am really so moved, Buxton, that I know not what to say. In what line would you start?"

"In any; the best is that which will pay best."

"Can you think of prostituting your talents to the will of another?"

"I think not of the subject in that way. I see no distinction in doing my best for a client whether it be by the press or at the bar. Is the oracle of the pen more sacred than that of the tongue?"

"No, certainly not; but would you undertake to maintain opinions that you condemn, or to controvert others that you approve?"

"Is it not the duty of an advocate to undertake all sorts of causes? Has the defence of even the undeniably guilty been ever held dishonourable?"

"True, it has not; but I have never been quite sure that it is always free from blame?"

"You think not, Franks, in that with your wonted acumen. Don't you know that men

are rarely sensible of their guilt, even when most contrite; nor is it with actions, and the effects of actions, that the law has to do, but with the sentiments under which they have been performed. The man who accidentally kills another, injures society as much as the deliberate murderer; and yet how differently both the law and society look upon their several deeds."

"You frighten me," was the reply: "do you mean to say, that there is an usurpation in the law when it assumes to decide between accident and intention?"

"No: not an usurpation, but the law has assumed that guilt is susceptible of human proof; or in other words, that the motives by which criminals are actuated may be proved by evidence."

"Gracious! and don't you think so, Buxton?"

"The law says so, but admits the advocate to take the spirit of the criminal, and to protect him from its vengeance, if he can, by showing all those palliations of crime with which men mitigate to themselves the atrocities

of their own actions. I do not say that jurisprudence assumes too much when it declares, as with the authority of the Godhead, that offences may be determined in the character of their criminality by human testimony or by circumstances, for it admits at the same time, that by the ingenuity of human reasoning the criminality may be explained away. If you grant that a crime may be determined to be such by the force of external evidence, it is but justice to the criminal to hear what moral ingenuity can allege in extenuation."

"I am perplexed ! What are we, then, to think of our English law, which cannot be said to fairly admit any such extenuation ? The jury decide by the evidence only as to the fact, and yet we all know that evidence can never afford a stronger demonstration of any motive than probability."

"But," said Buxton, interrupting him, "we are wandering from the subject ; the question simply is, why should it be deemed more derogatory to undertake the vindication of opinions for hire, than the defence of actions for fees."

“In truth, Buxton, I see no great difference between them; but the world has always thought that an honest man cannot advocate sentiments by his pen contrary to his judgment. I own, however, that there must be some fallacy in the notion, for both honest men and good patriots have defended thieves and traitors, and by the bravery of their eloquence have added to their own renown.”

“Come, come, Franks, take the world as it is; we can only mend it by little and little. Were we immortal entities, there might be some reason in sifting the principles of legal expedients; but earthly beings that must live by things as they are, it were most unwise in a worldly sense to examine either codes or crimes too curiously. We are sent into the world to make our way to the grave with as much enjoyment as we possibly can obtain without harming others; all the rest of virtue is but ‘leather and prunella.’”

Mr. Franks, without being able to imagine wherefore, felt his spirits depressed by this conversation. Hitherto, he had been rather

the adviser of his friend, but the other had at once taken a tone above him, although he was not able to discover in what its superiority consisted, especially as there appeared more of subtlety than of wisdom in his opinions.

CHAPTER V.

FOR some days after Stanley Buxton had removed into his new chambers, he employed himself in arranging a few elementary books, of which Franks had made him a present. This and the state of the wintry weather kept him at home; but occasionally in the evenings he frequented the Chapter Coffee House, which he had learnt was the resort of literary men, who are authors by profession, expecting to glean among them a few hints that might be of use in his subsidiary pursuit. But he soon saw by the sombre, silent, and unsocial character of the company, that he had little to expect there; perhaps too, his aristocratic taste was offended by the low-ceiled darkling vulgarity of the apartment. Without, however, coming

to any resolution on the subject, an incident occurred which not only interrupted his visits, but had a romantic influence on his future life.

Adjoining the attic into which he had removed, he learnt from the laundress that an old solitary man resided.

“He is very learned,” said she; “years has he lived here, and no one ever saw him receive a visitor. His room is filled with books—he is a great reader; and though he never seems to be rich, he has always plenty of money.”

“What is he like?” replied Stanley Buxton. “I may have met with him.”

“There is nothing about him remarkable, only he is always nicely dressed in black, and his recreation, when he tears himself from his books, is on the newspapers in one of the neighbouring coffee-houses, where he sometimes spends the evening.”

“His name?”

“Hyams,—Joseph Hyams, Esq.; he gets a letter so addressed every year, on new year’s day, and the same evening he sends an answer by the post.”

“ To whom is his answer addressed ? ”

“ To one Mrs. Wimborn, to be left at the Hound and Hare Inn, near Thrapplesea, in Glamorgan. It is the only letter he ever sends out, and I expect it as regularly as the year begins.”

“ He is an odd character,” replied our hero ; “ what is he, or what can he have been ? ”

“ That ’ s just what I say to myself every morning when I fetch away his breakfast things.”

“ And have you never been able to guess ? ”

“ Not exactly, to a certainty ; but I think he has been far in the Indies, for one morning he told me how his rice used to be boiled at a place they call Marrybambore, where he lived by himself, and had yellow Ingy servants. He often tells me queer things about Marrybambore.”

“ Has he no friends ? ”

“ He has that Mrs. Wimborn for a correspondent once a year. If he wanted more, no doubt lots of them might be had in London.”

“ Then you think he shuns companions ? ”

“ He plainly never seeks them ; but whether

he avoids them, or does not happen to meet with any, is best known to himself."

"Is he a miser, think you?"

"Oh, bless you, no; he's a perfect gentleman with his money, only it's his humour to live alone."

"Is he altogether unknown?"

"I can but speak, sir, from what I have seen; and I think if he had many friends, surely they would not let him live so lonely. However, he no doubt has his own reasons for being so mystical; but I wonder how it happens that one who cares for nobody, and is as little cared for, should be so particular and nice in his dress. He is, for a man that dresses in black, a perfect idol."

"Does he talk much to you?"

"Sometimes; but he is not a regular introductory character. He will be whole weeks that I never hear the word of his breath; at other times he will tell such things you can't think, about the Ingy servants at Marribambore, where he lived longer than I can tell, without being gladdened by the christian eye of a human creature."

“ Living in so remote a place, and so much alone, has doubtless begotten in him these strange solitary ways.”

“ You would not think so, if you saw him ; he’s so mild and well-bred, a lord could not be more courteous.”

“ You make me curious to see this singular person.”

“ That need not, Sir, be difficult.”

“ What coffee-house does he chiefly frequent ?”

“ Sometimes one, and sometimes another. He’s oftenest found at Eldridge’s.”

After this conversation, Stanley Buxton continued, during a considerable time, seemingly absorbed in his own thoughts, and when the laundress left him, he still sat ruminating. It seemed to him that his adventures in life were about to commence, and that he could discover a similarity between his own solitude and that sequestration from the world which interested him in his neighbour.

“ It cannot be,” said he aloud, “ that he has met with any change so remarkable as mine ; but it is strange, passing strange, that a

man should so entirely abstain from social intercourse. He surely had early companions; even were he a foundling, he would have had some such young familiars. I can conceive how, coming from a distant part in the interior of India, he may not have found in London either acquaintance or friends; but it is unaccountable, that he should have lived many years here without acquiring one associate—unless he chose it should be so: and what motive could he have, for motive he must have had, otherwise he would have taken up his abode amidst the scenes of his youth, rather than live no better than the life of a bug, in these creaking garrets of the Temple? But might he not have had for this, causes like my own—though he may never have been a changling? There is a spot where ONE is still interested in him. All the rest of the world is empty—I waste, however, my ingenuity in these conjectures—I will go this evening to Eldridge's, and throw myself in his way."

At that moment a gentle knocking was heard at the door, and he called aloud, "to come in." The door opened, and Mr. Hyams entered.

His appearance startled Buxton like a visionary apparition ; for the laundress in her tale had given him no reason to imagine that there could be the slightest chance of such a visitation.

“ I shall make no apology for this intrusion,” said the old gentleman, with a pleasant composed smile. “ The laundress, with her usual garrulity, has just been telling me that you have some intention to make my acquaintance, and though it may seem a singular mode of doing so, I have come, in consequence, to decline the honour.”

“ I should infer from that,” replied our hero, also smiling, and with that quickness of apprehension which his new circumstances had awakened—“ you have some reason to assign.”

Mr. Hyams, not quite prepared for so applicable an answer, paused for a moment, in evident embarrassment ; from which, however, he was relieved, by Buxton politely requesting him to be seated, saying affably,

“ You can as well explain yourself sitting ;” and perceiving that a pale cast of thought saddened the countenance of his visitor, he caught

the infection, and added seriously—"Perhaps I ought not to be surprised that my acquaintance is declined."

Mr. Hyams took a chair opposite to him, and looking at him steadily in the face, said,

"If you have thought of seeking the acquaintance of another, why should you dread that, for your own sake, your friendship, if intended to go so far, might be rejected? Only the tainted are aware that they should be shunned. It cannot be that one so young, on whom Nature has been so lavish of external gifts, and whose looks indicate an intelligence worthy of such partiality, should have already cause to doubt the good will of the world, or his own worthiness to receive it."

"Your words confound me!" replied Buxton—"pardon the freedom that your frankness provokes: have you then cause to decline my acquaintance on your own account?"

"I did not expect this, young gentleman—I have," was the firm answer of Mr. Hyams; and he subjoined, "and that should satisfy you. Can you desire now to make my acquaintance?"

“More, ten times more than ever; I had but before a curious wish to know something of a strange character, but you have turned the wish into a passion. There must be something worth knowing about a man who has so lowly an estimate of himself that he shrinks from the society of others.”

“Men of rank do so always—from their inferiors,” replied Mr. Hyams. “Can one who looks so like a mind be so green in the world as not to have yet observed, that more than the half of merit is made up of the circumstances in which it is exhibited?”

“I should have noted that; I have had more cause than most men,” said Buxton, with a sigh; but suddenly springing as it were with elasticity into cheerfulness, he added, “Come, let me have your reason, or it will soon be out of your power to prevent what only curiosity had prompted. I would not now be content with mere acquaintanceship, and as a motive that you must not stint me to only that, let me add, I need friendship, which is not perhaps discreet to tell a stranger, one too, who says of himself, I ought to shun him.”

“Better, and better,” cried the old gentleman. “In what region, and amidst what creatures of the element have you been bred? Can you speak so candidly, and think of studying the law? You know not the task you undertake; the quirks and the quiddities you have to learn, for which you have no capacity. However, you shall hear my story, and then ——”

“What then?” exclaimed Buxton.

“You shall judge if I may dare to be your friend.”

“There is my hand in token that I am sure you will.”

This singular conversation could only have been so sustained on the part of our hero, in consequence of the accidents of his own experience. The gentlemanly freedom of the stranger had doubtless its natural effect, in drawing him out into such frankness; but the sharp-sightedness with which he detected, as it were, a peculiar motive in the eccentricity of Mr. Hyams, impressed that shrewd and thoughtful observer with a high opinion of his natural sagacity.

CHAPTER VI.

“ I AM so eager that you should be speedily in a condition to determine whether or not you ought to seek my acquaintance,” said Mr. Hyams, “ that I will state the fact at once. As a gentleman solicitous of reputation in the world, you—cannot—” and he paused.

“ Why ?” replied our hero, somewhat disconcerted.

“ Because I am—a thief—a tried convicted thief. Do you now wish to hear more ?”

Poor Buxton, overwhelmed with perplexity, was completely overset ; but he quickly rallied, and said briskly,

“ What sort of thief ? much depends on the nature of the delinquency.”

“ A thief of money, as sordid as the law

knows the crime—I stole from the scrutoire of a friend.”

“Nay then, since you so blame yourself, deal plainly with me; granted the fact, tell me the circumstances.”

“Will you believe me?”

“Why not? you have already charged yourself in terms that admit of no alleviation; what you have therefore to add respecting the circumstances, can only be to your advantage. Were I to be satisfied with the simple fact, I should perhaps be guilty of injustice. I take you, at your own word, to have been a thief. I speak plainly—at your own word. I should be glad to hear what were the circumstances.”

“Had I not heard something of your story, Mr. Buxton, I should not have paid you this visit. I expected, in consequence, to find a man with strange notions; for I have noticed that those who meet with singular adventures, acquire original ways of thinking; but I did not hope to discover a young man of genius. My own story is, however, soon told.”

“I am all attention.”

“I began the world as a cornet of dragoons,

and the partiality of my companions flattered me with an idea that I was no ordinary youth. My fortune was equal to my condition as a gay and gallant favourite: not being, however, the best of economists, I sometimes outran the constable, but neither base nor ungentlemanly thoughts ever sullied my imagination. One night I had engaged myself with some brother officers to an excursion early in the morning; but on going to my room, I found my purse tenantless. The circumstance was nothing new. I went instantly to the bedchamber of another friend, to borrow a few guineas. Though it was late, he was still abroad, but his scrutoire was accidentally open, and I saw several notes in a pigeon-hole: without reflecting, I took one of ten pounds, intending to excuse the freedom when we next met, and returned with it to my own room. In the morning I set out with the party to whom I was engaged, without seeing my friend; in truth, without thinking of him; and in the evening, when we came back, we found the whole regiment in a ferment. The robbery was discovered, and the servant of my friend was in prison as the thief.

“The news distracted me—I was stunned—I knew not what to do—and I did what I ought not to have done. Instead of going at once to my friend, and telling the truth, I consulted another raw boy—and somehow a great part of the evening passed before I recovered my senses, and that not until the prisoner had declared that he had only left the room for a minute, and on returning up-stairs, thought he saw me coming out of it.

“This, with my too late disclosure, fixed guilt, the dirty guilt of theft upon me. Spare me the recital of particulars. I was taken up, tried, and condemned, and only pardoned in consideration of my previous spotless character, and the probability that was in my story, by the footing of familiarity on which I had lived with my friend.

“My relations soon after obtained for me a civil appointment in India, and I was sent to a remote station. But the blemish was never to be effaced, and while solitary there, I came to the resolution I have ever since adhered to; not to allow myself to make an acquaintance. Your casual remark to the laundress alarmed

me, but I resolved to abide by my principle ; your own singular story, however, had some influence on my decision—and now it is for yourself to decline or accept.”

Our hero was much interested by the hurried manner, and, if the expression may be used, the quivering emotion, with which Mr. Hyams related his story.

But the hazard of commencing his own career, in a profession so jealous of the honour of its members, by forming an acquaintance with a pardoned felon, flashed upon him like a wild and amazing light. He felt, however, the candour which had prompted the communication, and could not but do homage to the virtue by which it was dictated. The impression also, of the indescribable agitation with which it had been delivered, interdicted the entrance of every thing like doubt of the culprit's innocence of intention in the crime. But the fear of the world was before his eyes, and he remained some time silent.

Mr. Hyams sat opposite with a brighter aspect, and also said nothing ; he waited the answer as if he cared not what it might be ;

but his consternation, for no feebler term can describe his astonishment, was extreme, when, after an austere glance expressive of riveted resolution, Buxton said with a grave and even stern voice,

“What is your own opinion? which should it be?—accept, or decline?”

Another pause of about a minute ensued, and then Mr. Hyams, who had evidently been inwardly severely shaken by the question, replied,

“You are too bold—will you be governed by the answer?”

“I will; but tell me first what your sentiments have been during the long period of your sequestration from the world.”

“I was among strangers who knew not of my stain, and all things went as they were wont to do. I might have suffered nothing, but for the wound that was within. That, however, was with me always; and could it have been cured I had changed my name, but there was in it an anguish irremediable; the gnawing of the worm that never dieth—and therefore I made no attempt to struggle with

the current of my fortune, but floated as the stream guided—I never steered aside from any chance of being known. My friends procured me an obscure and remote appointment, but in Calcutta I should have lived as impalpable to society as I do in London.”

“And yet you were innocent?”

“And yet I was innocent!—I could not be divested of my consciousness of that.”

“Then wherefore were you so wounded?”

“Because I could not eradicate the brand which the laws of my country had marked me with. But you are too curious. The burning was never more painful than at this moment. Excuse me, if I remind you of the question.”

“Answer it, should, or should I not accept your friendship?”

“To accept,” replied Mr. Hyams, “may do you injury, irreparable injury in the estimation of the world: on my account you may be called to sacrifices of the heart, as well as of your prospects; and to decline you will be no better.”

Our hero looked at him, and said—"Your words are Delphic. By accepting I may be injured,—by declining I may be no better; I will take the oracle in its plainest sense—I accept."

"My son, my son!" cried the old man, falling on his neck, and weeping bitterly.

Buxton withdrew from his embrace—exclaiming—"What is this? What words are these? Know you to whom these words are said?"

"Have I not already told you that I know something of your story; I know it all."

"Trifle not with me, ye malignant stars!"

"The quick spirit of my youth," replied the old man, "has not yet learned the prudent processes of wary age. But hark! there is a rustle of visitors—I hear strange feet upon the stairs—they are coming to you, and I must retire."

At this moment Franks with his father entered, and Mr. Hyams bowing to them, passed out as they came in. Mr. Franks senior noticed him particularly, and looked

after him till the door was shut; but a letter which his son soon after wrote to his old school-fellow, Ralston, gives a better account of the scene that ensued, than could any second-hand description.

CHAPTER VII.

“ London.

“ DEAR RALSTON,

“ IT was not my intention to write you so early again, after what I said to you in my last,* respecting the manner in which the decision of Buxton's character begins to show itself; but what I told you of the abrupt change he had made in his chambers, has been followed by a change as sudden in himself. He is evidently shunning every thing calculated to remind him of what he was, and if he did no more, he would only increase the interest with which he has inspired me, but I fear that to accomplish this, he is seeking refuge among a class of persons towards whom it

* This letter has not been preserved.

could not previously have been conceived he would ever feel the slightest affinity. I am, however, thoroughly convinced he is of that good mettle which will take no blemish from contact with a meaner substance, and much must be allowed for the distressing novelty of his situation.

“You are aware, that among the recesses of this metropolis, the inns of court have been time out of mind regarded as the most unexplored and mysterious labyrinths. The abodes of many doleful creatures, and in their cob-web tapestried chambers, things more obscene than toads or bats have made their lairs and dwelling places. Some of these undivulged inhabitants are makers of verses, contrivers of anecdotes, writers in Reviews, and artificers of other no less offensive practices—a man that in any way lends himself to their company is sure to be fastened on beyond the power of riddance, and may find himself, in consequence, associated with a race whom he shall afterwards in vain desire to shake off. But to the point: I am afraid that Buxton, not sufficiently sensible to

this danger, is falling under the dominion of these incubii.

“The other morning, my father having some business to transact with his legal adviser, I went with him to the Temple, and when we had finished our consultation, we resolved to call on Buxton; but on entering his room, we found him in close conclave with a person of the name of Hyams, who had been pointed out to the old gentleman as a notorious gambler: many years ago he was dismissed his regiment for some nefarious transaction of that kind. My father does not recollect the particulars, but they were very bad, and Hyams has since been cut by all his former associates.

“Buxton said nothing of the stranger who immediately retired, but from his appearance, he did not seem altogether quite at ease on being discovered with a person whose disreputable character he evidently knew. Our visit was but for a few minutes, and during the whole time something unaccountable hung over and embarrassed the poor fellow. For myself, I can have no doubt of his worth, honour, and

probity ; nor does my father question the justness of my opinion. He only remarked, after we came away, that Buxton was a fit subject for temptation, and his necessities might draw him into expedients and company, which in happier circumstances he would avoid with disdain.

“ This little affair has vexed me more than I can describe ; for in consequence of an observation which my father made at the time, with his usual prudence, I must be, as it were, necessarily guarded, and Buxton is so sharp-sighted, that he will soon detect the slightest inflection in my manner, so quickened has he become to every shade and variation of deportment. ‘ It is only since his misfortunes,’ said the old gentleman, ‘ that you have come to know him intimately. You were not much acquainted with his courses in his former station. I would, therefore, advise you to observe him more narrowly ; for his visitor augurs nothing satisfactory.’

“ The impression of this admonition has been deepened by a circumstance in itself almost mysterious. Next day, I fell in with Buxton

in the street; we were as cordial as usual, and walked together for some distance, when in passing along the Strand, we fell in with Hyams. I expected, as a matter of course, that he would stop to speak with him, and accordingly slackened my arm to allow him to withdraw his; but, strange enough, he held fast, and walked past him, as if he knew him not; and yet I could discover a familiar glance of recognition exchanged between them, and turning my eye on our friend, saw him blushing like an apple, or a maiden.

“Perhaps you will think I ought to have inquired what he knew of Hyams, and indeed I was on the point of doing so, but he interrupted me by one of those abrupt evasions which he occasionally uses.

“I said, with the intention of making the inquiry, ‘Is not that the gentleman I met the other morning at your chambers?’ to which he replied with a dry emphatic ‘Yes!’ which precluded all further inquiry.

“Is it not remarkable that he who feels so much at the delinquency of his own father, should have formed a hidden intimacy with a

character that he must be ashamed to be seen associating with? But I have expressed myself in this too sharply. Perhaps the man had some ordinary business with him—indeed I think on reflection it must have been so—but that reddening tinge disturbs me. Write me soon; and believe me,

“ Ever yours,

“ HENRY FRANKS.”

When the Laird had twice silently read this epistle, he looked towards Miss Sibby Ruart, who was busy with her patch-mork, at the opposite side of the fire, and requested her attention for a moment. He then read the letter aloud, and as he concluded, said,

“ What think you of this ?”

“ The young man is, no doubt,” replied the sagacious spinster, “ in a state of readiness for the talons of the tempter; for its one of the perils of life, that misfortune and temptation come ay linking hand in hand. But be not overly ready to take every thing that Harry Franks tells you for gospel; for I see he’s just the same rash-headed and soft-hearted

bucketibee that he was when at the Dominie's school. Yon young man, by what I saw of him when he was here, has a better top than a bullrush. Depend upon it, he'll play his cards to some purpose."

"That," said the Laird, "is what Franks fears—he dreads his playing cards at all."

"Poo, poo! it was not paper cards I meant, but spiritual cards—they are the true cards of fortune. Ye'll see him a magnificent man yet."

"These tidings, however, Miss Sibby, point not to that end. I must say that this intelligence has troubled me. You have heard what old Mr. Franks thinks."

"I have, Laird, and I have considered it with solid judgment. He may be a discreet gentleman, as no doubt he is; but for a man who is himself in a jeopardy, to jealousy an ill thing from an accident of a neighbour in straits, is no' the vera heighth of wisdom."

"I have often thought, Miss Sibby, that you have a clever talent in reading the characters of men; and I am half inclined to think also, from what I know of Mr. Buxton, that

friend Franks has been a little hasty in the construction he has put upon this affair."

"All women," replied the lady, pleased with the compliment, "read mankind with a clearer understanding of their natures than men do one another; yet I must think by your discernment, Laird, that the male sex have a corresponding advantage over women."

"But, Miss Sibby, what should I say to Franks; for by his own acknowledgment this incident, trifling as it is, has produced a serious effect?"

"We all know that Harry Franks was of old a laddie that saw evil spirits in summer coats,* but though he saw something, it does not follow that it was what he thought."

In this household manner they continued some time longer, discussing the subject, and in time for the next post, two days after, as the weather was rainy, and the Laird could not take the field, he concocted the following answer.

* That visible fluctuation of the air in sultry weather when the atmosphere is not in its purest transparency—I remember an old schoolfellow calling them Zephyrs.

“Gowans.

“DEAR FRANKS,

“YOUR letter would have given me some uneasiness, but luckily, my cousin, Miss Sibby, to whom I commonly read your communications, put on her spectacles of discernment, as she calls her natural shrewdness, and could see nothing in it but the same raw head and bloody bones which so often used to haunt your imagination at school. I confess myself a little inclined to her opinion, for although Buxton has peculiarities, both natural and acquired, the lees and sediment that stick to him of his former condition, yet there is about him an unexerted strength of mind, that he will undoubtedly put forth when the occasion presses.

“Matters are here much as when he left us; Mrs. Howard is still at her sister's, and Miss Julia Sorn at the minister's, moping, and downhearted. It is really a pity that Buxton could not bring himself to regard her with more tenderness, for I am inclined to believe that much of that affectation which he so disliked in her,

is only assumed under a false notion of rendering herself agreeable to him. The poor girl when out of these fits, is not without sense and many pleasing qualities.

“The weather has been soaking of late. I have not been to the Moors these three days; I had, however, a capital shot in the yard yesterday, from a window; among other victims, the only two laying hens of Miss Sibby’s particular flock, were literally sent to pot or spit, besides a bushel of sparrows, and the dowager duck, which, you will recollect, was said to be, in your time, eleven years old.

“Truly your’s,

“A. RALSTON.”

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER Franks had sent off the letter to the Laird, conveying the unpleasant thoughts which the accidental discovery of Buxton's acquaintance with Mr. Hyams had suggested, he became ill at ease, and dissatisfied with himself. He apprehended that he had been too rash in his judgment, and had expressed himself with harder feeling than he could justify. But still he imagined that there was something doubtful in what he had observed, and in consequence, resolved to have the matter cleared up as delicately as he could ; accordingly, the very next morning, he went to the Temple for this purpose.

In ascending the creaking, obscure, and paralytic staircase which led to Buxton's cham-

bers, he met Mr. Hyams coming out of his. One flight lower, and he would have concluded that he had been visiting his friend, but seeing him in the act of locking his door, explained the vicinity of their neighbourhood, and nearly satisfied his curiosity.

When admitted to Buxton, he found him engaged on some literary task, and he felt cold at the heart, when he remarked the elegance of his morning dishabil, remnants of other times, contrasted with the small and mean one-windowed apartment. But his reception was warm and cordial; happy to see him apparently so reconciled to his circumstances, he took a seat beside him, and entered into conversation. After some time, he then said with seeming indifference in his voice, but the quick-sighted Buxton detected an earnest purpose in his eye—

“Who is the old gentleman that has the next chambers? I met him on the stairs.”

The complexion of Buxton deepened, but he replied with a steady voice.

“In truth I know very little about him, save what he has himself told me.”

“Has there been any thing odd in it, that he should have done so?”

A redder flush overspread the countenance of his friend, who, however, at once said,

“Why do you inquire? When we met him in the street yesterday, I saw you particularly notice him. Had you any reason?—but your question assures me that you have.”

“None, Mr. Buxton, but the interest I feel in your welfare. That interest must excuse my seeming impertinence.”

“Then you know his character—can you therefore, be surprised that I should not like to be publicly known as his acquaintance. Indeed, we have so arranged it between us, that we are to be only associates in our chambers.”

Franks leaned back in his chair, totally unable to reply—but at last, after a pause of some minutes, he said,

“But why associate with such a man at all?”

“I am satisfied he was innocent, and I think his subsequent life has shown it.”

“This secret friendship is a strange compact, Mr. Buxton; surely you have not sufficiently

reflected on the consequences of encouraging a hidden intimacy with a professed gambler."

Our hero was startled at this; and exclaimed,
"It cannot be so."

"My father," replied Franks, "told me that he is well known about town as such; but the exact nature of the fraud for which he was dismissed the army he does not recollect. Did Mr. Hyams tell you?"

"He did."

Another brief pause ensued, which from the manner of Buxton's answer, compelled his friend to add,

"And has it been such, that nevertheless you are disposed to associate with him?"

Instead of returning a direct answer, Buxton said briskly,

"Come, come, Mr. Franks, let us deal freely, otherwise I see we shall misunderstand each other. Mr. Hyams has been an unfortunate man; he has explained to me in what it consisted—it was meaner than gaming—but it was a youthful inadvertency, for which he has voluntarily sacrificed considerable talents, and abstained from the use of a plentiful fortune.

I ask to know no more, and I do not feel myself at liberty to tell more about him, even to you. But yesterday morning, when you found us together, he had just amazed me with an expression to which I too aptly gave credence."

"If you are content, Mr. Buxton, I need say no more; but how did he so surprise you?"

"He had been telling his story, and something that I said in reply so affected him, that he fell on my neck, and called me his son. You know the weak feeling which infests me on that subject; but before I could ask for an explanation, you came in with your father, and he retired. In the evening he called again, and explained that it was but an accidental expression of kindness; so many years had elapsed since he had received any mark of sympathy, that his feelings overcame him. He knows, however, something of my own story, and it has been the cause of our acquaintance."

"But who or what is he?" inquired Franks.

"I cannot yet say—he has only related the incident that leads him to live sequestered from society; but some evening he has promised me the whole account. I see you are not quite

pleased at all this; keep yourself, however, easy; I am more master of myself than you imagine, and will not become intimate with him beyond what subsequent observations may warrant."

"It is a curious adventure," replied Franks, "but I am glad to hear you say so."

"Every thing that befalls me," said Buxton, "partakes of the same quality."

At this point their conversation diverged into more general topics, during which Franks mentioned that his father spoke of sending him in confidence to transact an affair of importance at Vienna.

"I hope," said he, "Mr. Buxton, that you will not think I profess greater anxiety about you than what I truly feel, when I say that I shall leave London with regret, before you have fairly established yourself in your studies."

His friend made no answer, but took him cordially by the hand, and seemed with difficulty to repress a sudden burst of agitation. It was, however, only momentary, for he soon recovered himself, and remarked,

"You are too apprehensive; I am every day growing less and less familiar with the

traces of memory, and more and more delighted with my studies. I never knew before the pleasure of being in earnest, and you know not the value I would now set on it. However, before you go, come and see me, for even with the cloud that hangs about Mr. Hyams, and which so greatly interests my imagination, he is not enough of acquaintance to take lessons of mankind on."

"I rejoice to hear you say so," replied Franks, moving to retire, "for it implies that the sentiment which made you shrink from the world is gradually disquarming: get the mastery of the diffidence which your singular situation has inspired, and then—"

"Well?" said Buxton smiling.

"Destiny will read better things from the next page of her book."

Franks then retired, and when the door was shut, our hero resumed his seat, but instead of again taking up his pen, he remained in a ruminating attitude, and after some time said in soliloquy,

"There is more danger in the impulses of a warm-hearted friend than in the stratagems

of a cool-headed enemy. Franks in his zeal to serve me, outruns the need of the occasion. He is evidently alarmed—why? Because Hyams is disreputable; and yet Hyams himself is so well aware of his taint, that it may be more correctly said I seek him: he shrinks from me. Is it of such extreme necessity that those who most require friends, should stand so much in awe of strangers? Formerly, it seemed, that I might choose or lay aside companions at my pleasure: was that a privilege of aristocracy? If so, then have I indeed lost something more than rank or fortune. How enviable to have the culling of society, the pick and elect, without the risk of making adversaries—a risk equality ever entails: weak thought! The privilege of choice can be only used with inferiors, and those who are so base as to submit to be so used—are they of such stuff as a man would call his friends? But this is idle controversy; I cannot change the staple of my fortune by vain regrets, or manly resolutions—and must wear it as it has been woven, alike in sunshine or foul weather; a steady visage, and

an equal mind, adversity may overshadow, but hath not the power to impair."

These disjointed sentences show how deeply his blasted condition affected Buxton, but they also show that his reflections were struggling into that channel in which, when once they took the easy flow of habitude, his natural ability would bear him forward to his superior destination.

CHAPTER IX.

NOTHING is so odious as to see others commit those weak or fond actions of which we recollect ourselves to have been guilty in the folly of youth or passion ; and yet it is strangely also a source of enjoyment, for we have an invidious pleasure in witnessing that our neighbours are not wiser than ourselves. To this feeling, Stanley Buxton was not, however, particularly alive, he was perhaps still too young to have experienced it in any great degree, for it grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength, and in time suggests a rule of conduct.

His outset as an author probably differed in few of its incidents from those which commonly await the first stages of the literary ca-

reer, but his previous habits made it appear adventurous to himself. He was little aware of following the beaten path, and perhaps imagined himself originally ingenious in contriving the expedients by which he expected to establish himself with the publishers and the public, but in them all he was only commonplace, and had a type of himself in every juvenile contributor to the magazines. It is, therefore, unnecessary to describe them; probably the description might remind us too much of what we know full well—some of those weak or fond things to which we have been alluding, and which all desire to forget, and yet are amused in contemplating, reiterated by others.

In one respect, it must be allowed his course was not altogether that of an ordinary author. His secret acquaintance, Mr. Hyams, furnished him with an adviser of the utmost importance, and an agent to facilitate the introduction of his manuscripts with due consequence to the booksellers, without appearing himself connected with them.

That gentleman living recluse, and apart

from society, had leisure to observe the world, and being both a great reader, and a collector of curious books, was well known by appearance to the trade. His taste, however, did not much lead him to deal in fashionable literature. On the contrary, the erudition to which in latter years he had gradually become addicted, led him to frequent only the obscure and recondite bibliopoles, but through their means he worked himself, for his young friend, into consideration with the others, the vignettes of the profession.

His reputation as a learned man begat respect for his opinions ; a persuasion prevailed, founded on his taciturnity, that his critical acumen was of a superior order ; and accordingly, with such a forerunner, it may be said, our hero possessed some advantage, not indeed quite equal to that of those who have literary friends, for Mr. Hyams himself was not a writer, nor did he frequent any of those coteries wherein the merits of an author are first established.

When Buxton explained to him, how much he stood in need of a Mæcenæ, Mr. Hyams was

at a loss to conceive in what way he could serve him.

“All my bookselling friends,” said he, “are of the moth-eaten kind. They live in holes and corners, and the spider is their chum, but I will see what can be done. There is a youthful old man who burrows near Smithfield, and deals in sublime mathematics, ancient books, and copies of those rare pamphlets, of which, nearly all the impressions perished in the Fire of London. I will have some discourse with him. He has once or twice invited me to share a bottle of port in his up-stairs parlour, but which I have hitherto declined. However, this very evening, I will invite myself. He is an odd, cunning mole of a Scotchman, and if there be any peculiar sleight in the art of obtaining celebrity, I am sure he either knows it himself, or can direct us where it may be learned.”

“May you not take me with you?” said the aspirant.

“Impossible! he is a queer-shapen character, and would be terrified at the vision of one so spruce, gliding along the distant horizon of his

dark dominions. Moreover, he is a strange, self-conceited curiosity, and probably would be little inclined to hold any discourse with me, were you there; nay, he may not choose to speak on the subject at all, unless he be in the vein. But I will try what can be done."

Accordingly, that afternoon, towards sunset, Mr. Hyams went to the "Martyrs' Hole," as the occult court is called, where the Bookseller resided, and after some conversation, said,

"By the way, Mr. Wooden, you have often invited me to taste your fine old crusted port; now this evening, having had a longish walk, I could relish a glass, were you to invite me."

"To be sure, Sir—I'll do that," replied the Bibliopole, "and be thankful for your partaking; but it's a pity you did no' come before I had my tea, for it would then have been more relishing to myself. Howsomever, better late do well than never mend. The chappy here will take tent to the shop, and we'll just make ourselves comfortable for half an hour. It's no' often I indulge in such dainties, Mr. Hyams, but we have been long friends, and I maun say, ye're no' an ill customer, though ye

did wile that Caxton from me, for mair than a crown less than it was worth. To say nothing of the first edition of the Pilgrim's Progress, which a lord that shall be nameless, sent a man to buy the very next morn's morning, after ye so pawkily took it away in your pouch."

Some farther preliminary discourse of this kind ensued, and then they adjourned up-stairs, where, after a glass or two of the wine, Mr. Hyams began warily to lead on to the object of his visit. But his various attempts were for some time abortive, for Wooden happened to be in an egotistical mood, and every glass strengthened his propensity to talk of himself, and the ways and means by which he had come to be so well to do in the world.

"It was not," said he, "without the ettle and sling of David, that I overcame the Goliath of difficulty that walks afore the camp of the Philistines o' the world, Mr. Hyams, and I assure you that ye have read both tales and romances, at least I have sold them to you, that had not more wonderful things in them, than I have proved in my own particular nature and personality. But fill your glass."

It did not appear to Mr. Hyams that there was any evident tendency in this kind of garrulity to help him to the information he was anxious to obtain, and he seemed rather inclined to say good night. His host was not, however, so disposed, and another glass having mellowed him into a proper humour, he added,

“Now, Mr. Hyams, ye need no’ be in such a fyke to go away, for we’re here under an obligation to finish this bottle. It’s no’ a small occasion that makes me draw a cork of this, which I will say is in a sense, *rose o solus*, and the best o’ it, and therefore as a walnut or a cracker, I’ll entertain you in the while, wi’ some account of myself, the which, no doubt, ye’ll be blithe to hear, having been so long, one of my best of regular customers.”

Mr. Hyams submitted to the infliction.

CHAPTER X.

“ I WAS bred and born at Aberlochie,” said Wooden, “ and when I had served my ’prenticeship, I came to London to make myself more artful in the trade, intending when completely perfited, that is, up to a’ things, to return to my native town, there to begin business. But I had not been long in the shop of the late Mr. Lore, so well known for his collection of works concerning men and manners, as well as in other abstruse sciences, when I saw that the metropolis was the natural sphere of a man of genius, and therefore I resolved to make it my domicile till I could make a fortune. So ye see I entered into an agreement with my master, by the which I became bound to serve him with fidelity and the uttermost of my power and

honesty, for the space of two years, when at the end thereof I was to have the option of a share in his business ; all which was in course o' time brought to a head, and I achieved my part of the covenant with sobriety and credit ; nor had I great cause to complain of him, though no doubt he had some advantage carefully concealed, for it is not to be supposed he would put me in the way of making money without some pecunious sinuosity that nourished his own pocket.

“ It happened, however, just as the two years expired, and when I was to make my election, that Mr. Lore fell sick, and every day grew worse and worse, insomuch that no final settlement for my future welfare could be brought to a bearing, for in the course of a fortnight he died, leaving his widow as well as all the business in a manner on my hands.

“ The premises where the shop then was, have been rebuilt several years, but at that time it was an elderly tenement, dark in its conveniences, though very suitable for the literary line, and the dwelling-house was up stairs like this.

“It had been a stipulation between me and the master that I was to live and domesticate with him, and, as there were no children in the way, it was surely a beneficial contrivance, for it gave into his hands the reins of my conduct, which to a certainty was very wholesome to me, who was then a sightly young man.

“It thus came to pass that both when Mr. Lore was lying a corpse, and for some time after, I was much with the widow, and did all in my power to sweeten her desolate condition ; sometimes discoursing of worldly matters as we behoved to do, on account of the outstanding bills and the stock in trade ; and at other times, especially on the Sabbath evenings, spiritualizing on the swiftness of human life, and the fluctuating vanities of man ; for I need not tell you, Mr. Hyams, that in those innocent Adam and Eve times, the handling of the outsides of books all the week gave me but little relish for their insides on the seventh day. Customs have since changed, but it has ever been my practice to adhere to the old established ordinances of the trade, and therefore my duty taught me, that the selling of books was the

whole intent and purpose of my calling. But to return.

“When the head of Mr. Lore had been some time laid in the grave—it cannot concern you, Mr. Hyams, to inquire how long after—I and the widow saw that it would be an advantage to make a reconciliation of our mutual interests, and accordingly, laying our heads together, we thought it would save a world of parchments, and law-writings, and taking inventories, and making valuations, which are very troublesome, to become man and wife. Thus was I soon settled in a comfortable downseat and established in business, to which I have aye clung with a judicious constancy.

“It is true and cannot be disguised, that when I married Mrs. Lore there was a clattering among the neighbours and a meddling, as on such occasions will be, and which cannot be called jocose, though it may be like it, imputing carnal predilections to both. But I know myself how unjust these injurious insinuations were, and I do assure you that I had no other end to compass than to get myself into a creditable way of life. How indeed could it be

thought that I, a bare lad, was allured by any but the most prudent motives and a commendable modicum of pitiful regard for the widow, when it was visible that Mrs. Lore might have been by many years my mother, and was moreover, short, and round, of a dumpy habit of body, and by no means a temptation? And what other cause could she have for taking me into connubial partnership, but the vexations and the rubs she met with in the shop? In short, we both were not tenderly considered for a time by our friends and neighbours; but the nine days being over, I proceeded with that sobriety, both as a husband and a bookseller, that has won me the good wishes of many in the trade; to say nothing of the credit that came to me by getting both the goodwill of the shop and the gathering of my worthy old master, the latter amounting to a sum of money that would have made any young man courageous.

“ Being then settled in the world, I began to cast my eyes about, looking for the best way of bettering my circumstances, and I made notes from time to time of the most ostensible

things that fell under my observation to help me into a proper sagacity for business; and how it behoves a right-minded bookseller to deal with that quisquous race, the authors, who hitherto have had the tale all their own way, and how they have blackened the characters of the most respectable members of the Stationers' Company, need not be told. But to proceed.

“After the flutter of the wedding doings was over, I made a proper quest into my prospects, and I saw that Mr. Lore not being a man of a perfect education, had in consequence been averse throughout life to the publishing line by himself, the same requiring a power of judgment and foretaste of what would please the palate of the public that but few in the trade can boast of; for as yet it is all chance whether what is published will take or not. In short, he had seldom stepped aside from his own methodical system, into the regions of speculation, save now and then by a small share in the reprint of some standard work. I had therefore little trouble in bringing that department of the business into a satisfactory train. But in doing so, it brought me more into the

fraternity of the enterprising, and I began to get gleams of light in my occasional discourses with them.

“Mr. Lore had confined himself to his steady business, and was little accustomed to mingle with the brethren; his life accordingly passed in the most regular manner—he was just a cuckoo-clock. He went seldom abroad, took his breakfast, his dinner, and his tea, exactly at the appointed hours, and soaked his feet on Saturday night; but such methodicality did not quite suit me,—a younger man, and living in a more enlightened epoch. So, as I have already intimated, being possessed of some capital by my marriage, and thinking how the dominions of my dealings could be safest enlarged, I went more about and picked up hints concerning men of reputation. I was not, however, hasty in risking the publication of a new book, but waited till I could get hold of a meritorious manuscript; for I soon discerned that it was of great consequence to begin with something of a taking nature.

“I saw also that in those days it was a great help to an industrious bookseller, to be some-

thing of an oddity in his dress and demeanour. A garb and conduct of that sort shows a man to have the bravery of thinking for himself, which begets respect, especially if his disguise have the cast of a bygone fashion ; and surely it is as innocent as the coxcombry that affects airiness and youth in a new : at least I found it so ; for seeing my taste for the antique, people were less surprised at the difference of age between me and my wife when they saw us together, than if they had seen me a spruce and rakish javelin, flickering among young women, and not the sober character that I so discreetly enacted. Besides, an uncommon way of behaviour is most useful, as in all trades where there is any dealing with particular tempers ; for no man can be long in the world before he discovers that to be able to give an abrupt answer is one of the greatest means of well-doing, inasmuch as it causes people to speak well of you behind your back, and to say, though you may be an oddity, still you are a man of sterling worth. No doubt, at times, we in this make an apology to ourselves for having submitted to treatment which ought to have been

resented. However, certain it is, that when I put my ancient disposition on, it was not without a consideration of mind, nor have I worn it so long without an advantage. But, friend, we must pause, for our glasses are gazening.*

* The state of a cask growing leaky with drought.

CHAPTER XI.

“ALTHOUGH I had no reason, in a certain sense,” resumed Mr. Wooden, “to complain of Providence, concerning my lot, I yet soon discerned that I stood in a predicament that enjoined a sedate circumspection; for as the business that I had inherited by my marriage was in the retail line, which requires a sharp eye to keep in right order, I found that there was a want about myself in it, which experience only could supply. Mr. Lore, in his day, had conquered a good name among the trade, and many sagacious country clergymen were likewise his customers, on account of his solid attention to have always on hand a good collection of books of a moral nature, and sermons which he bought cheap. In this, he was, in-

deed, very topping, and had the whole catalogue of these kind of works by heart ; but the stock could not be upheld without his memory, the which is a fact I have no shame in telling, so that as the old were sold off, and sometimes could only be replaced by care and search, I foresaw that the character he had left for knowledge in that branch would decline from the shop, and that my business would fall into the general bookselling, in which it could not be said he was a deacon. This put me on my mettle ; for I need not tell you, Mr. Hyams, that a man who deals in the promiscuous of any trade, not to say books, is not in the way, to use a homely Scottish phrase, to make his plack a bawbie.

“ Seeing, then, how inexperience was putting in jeopardy, to a degree, the best spoke in my wheel, and that as there were no means but time and patience, an overplus of which is not found in the heads that grow on young shoulders, whereby the lack could be supplied, I resolved, with wary wisdom, to strike out a new line, and accordingly, to discover what it should be was my chief study, for some

time, alike in the evening and the morning, and the mid-time of day, and also in the watches of the night.

“At that time the cauldron of our troubles with the Americans was simmering, and there was, in consequence, a moderate demand for political books, but it was not until the cauldron had come to the boil, that the demand grew to any thing like a regularity; though there was now and then a guess in the Whig pamphlets, they being bound by their principles to speak against the Tories, that the upshot would be as it fell out. The religion of the Church was not in those days popular, and among the better classes of society in particular it was certainly much out of fashion, altogether a little on the go. The Methodists, however, were in their corner kindling, and some of my acquaintance, who sat near me on the Lord Mayor’s day at dinner, in the Stationers’ Hall, said to one another, conversing on the signs of the times, that they would be none surprised, if out of the rising light of the Methodists, a good business would some day spring. This overheard hint I tied up with a knot in the

corner of the napkin of my remembrance, and took divers opportunities of throwing up a feather to see how the wind tended, until in the end I was well convinced that the wrack and carry was really going in the Methodistical direction. My choice, therefore, was restricted by the state of things to religion or to politics; but as neither could be said to offer a great temptation, I thought that for a season I would try both, and when I had found which was best, then give up the other.

“It may be thought, that there was an error of judgment in this, for why not adhere to both? But it should be recollected that London is a wide place, and when too many irons are in the fire, some of them will cool. Besides, I was desirous to establish a name among my brethren, and saw clearly that unless it was in a particular line, it could not be done with satisfaction; not, however, to summer and winter on this matter, suffice it to say, that as no man can serve God and mammon, I reflected on that Gospel truth, and set out with the positive intention of sticking to the one or to the other, that is, to religion or to politics, accord-

ing as I should in time discover, from which credit and profit were most likely to be best realized. But though Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, the increase cometh not of man ; accordingly it came to pass, that neither religion nor politics were in the end the staples of my traffic. But what I did by both, greatly helped me into my own ordained and natural line, which is a proof, that, although we may not bowl to the mark we aimed at in the beginning of life, yet by a constancy in trying, we shall be sure to lie not far from it in the end.

“When I had determined in my secret bosom to lay my fishing tackle in religion and in politics, I saw that it would be needful to have discreet counsellors, and that they ought to be of very different capacities and prejudices, or rather affections ; accordingly, I cast about to hear of a suitable divine to consult occasionally on religious works, not that I proposed at once to begin by taking upon me the hazards of publication, but that I might be able to warrant the merits of different works to customers, and thereby gradually establish a name for myself as a man of

correct judgment and knowledge, not only with the trade, but especially with those who had an influence among their neighbours.

“The first of my privy counsellors was the reverend Mr. Galoring, a man of repute as a preacher, who had weight and dominion over much people, especially elderly ladies of the single gender, or widows grieved with a want ; no man could give an opinion more like an oracle, either on a book or a point of doctrine, yet though the Gamaliel of his own sect, he was not just the man I stood in need of, being swayed at times by his own predilections, often recommending works, not for their merits, but because they were the productions of his friends ; a dangerous thing to a bookseller, for there is a spacious distance between the books we wish sold for the sake of the authors, and those that will sell for their own qualities. Mr. Galoring, was, however, useful ; for if overly partial to his acquaintance, he sailed on another tack, when the question was otherwise, and thus I found, that after having subtracted something with discretion, from the severity of his sentences of condemnation, the opinion

which remained was not far short of being judicious. Thus, if he never had a predominance over me, he continued, as long as he lived, one of those gentlemen to whom I have always made it a point to be particularly civil, nor was my course of conduct towards him barren of effect, for I could now and then discern with the tail of my eye, that he thought I had a sincere worship for his critical judgment, and in consequence, I saw he was better than my own copperplate card in the way of getting me customers of the Evangelical order, among his hearers and associates.

“But the stoop of the house to me, the pillar of my church, was the reverend, and much-commended Doctor Estridge, who, had he lived, would have led me to follow out the religious tract line, to a most profitable account. For he had that correct knowledge of human nature which enabled him to discover, in the materials of every work, the element that made it most attractive. One day, well do I remember it, he said to me, as we were composedly talking of the growth of immorality in a theological sense, and with no re-

ference to the shop, that he thought it was an error common to the divines of the establishment not to put a sufficiency of alloy in their discourses.

“‘Man,’ said Doctor Ettridge, ‘is not a creature that can live on heavenly manna alone; it must be cooked for his carnal appetite with the coarser fare of this world, and therefore I never can approve of those works of divinity which speak altogether to reason and common sense. They may do for the few, but the majority having ever more of the led fools among them, ought to be treated with the kind of respect which is suitable to their circumstances.’

“In pursuance of that notion the Doctor would say, ‘I encourage the dissemination of small books and twopenny tracts, published by mourning husbands in the twaddle of their sorrow, concerning the blessedness of their recently deceased wives, as well as the trials of the spirit endured by melancholious persons, and the experiences of pious gentlewomen in the month of May, all because the weak people who read such works with reverential hearts, would, but for them, be liable to fall into the

dangers of a far more detrimental kind of literature?

“But, Mr. Hyams, look to the yawning mouth of that glass of your’s, the which, if I did not observe, I would think ye were ganting at my story. Gie the poor thing a drap, for as the Scottish song says,

They that gant
Something want,
Sleep, meat or macking o.”

CHAPTER XII.

“BUT to resume,—the doctor was a man of the best of understandings, and did not read such things himself with credulity ; he would indeed have been a treasure to me, for it is ill to find a sensible man that will take the trouble of culling out, on so commendable a principle, the sort of tracts that a bookseller will find most advantageous to bring forward. My arrangement, indeed, with him, promised well ; he was to get a third part of the clear profit of all the books he found customers to buy. The same agreement was made between us for such works as he would advise me to publish, but nothing came of that, for he died suddenly of ‘poplexy, when we were in the act of deliberating concerning a manuscript which he said

promised well for a great sale, having been written by a person of talent and exceeding piety.

“Some time before this event, Blair’s Sermons had just been brought out, and I had some thought, as they were known to be selling well, more, however, on account of their style than for the marrow that was in them, to make an effort to get them introduced among the customers that I was then laying myself out for, but the doctor warned me against making any such attempt.

“ ‘My good friend,’ said he, ‘your interests lie with the multitude, and Doctor Blair addresses himself to the genteel and the rational—among whom you have no connexion—nor should seek to have, for it will be a long time before there be sermons again like his, and one book will not make a bookseller’s fortune. Blair’s sermons are, in truth, only for novel-readers, and not of that juicy orthodox substance which those who have a livelier sense of their own sinfulness, require.’

“And, indeed, the doctor never said a truer thing; for the very day after, a country clergy-

man made an agreement with me for the publication, on his own account, of a sermon he had preached, that was, as he said, greatly admired.

“ ‘ Sir,’ said he, ‘ I am not sanguine that the discourse will be popular, but as every clergyman, at least, will take a copy, and there are between nine and ten thousand parishes in England, suppose we should restrict the first edition to a bare ten thousand ; that ’s no inordinate expectation.’

“ I looked as he said this ; he was a thin, pale, patient, innocent looking, old man, whom it could not have been in the heart of fraud itself to wrong ; so I replied, that I would observe what he said, and accordingly I resolved to be waggish, especially as Dr. Ettridge declared the manuscript luke-warm, and would never sell. This happened about Midsummer, and the author remarked, that as he understood the booksellers settled their ’counts at Christmas, he would call about the beginning of the year for the profit that would then be due. To which I made no objection. But when he did call, such a heart-breaking look as he cast when

I presented a bill for the printing and publishing of ten thousand copies, besides a handsome bound copy for the Archbishop of York, and on the opposite side the sale of two to be deducted ! He really looked in my face like Jenny's mither, till my heart was like to break ; and then sat down on a chair, and wiping his forehead gave a deep sigh. I, however, was compassionate not to prolong his agony. So I told him the truth, and that I had not printed the sermon at all, as a good judge had advised me it would not take. But if I was amused at first, I was amused then ; for no sooner had I disclosed the fact, than he started up with as much anger in his look as a man of his meekness could put on, and said, that I had used him very ill in not obeying his order, for how could the merits of his sermon be known unless it was published ? and so saying, he called for the manuscript, and took it away in a huff that was most diverting, threatening me with the Court of Chancery.

“ But the balloons of vanity are not all set up by the clergy—statesmen have their kites and dragons likewise, and I have known more than

one good speaker in the House,—I'll no' say they were his Majesty's ministers,—who, when their speeches, corrected by themselves too, were not of the saleable order, used to send porters from the coffee-houses to get copies for themselves, from different houses in the trade, causing them to have a seeming of popularity; but by a jocose accident—I soon smelt a rat.

“One evening, just as I was shutting up shop to go to the club at ‘the Marrow-bone and Cleaver,’ a smart servant-boy in livery came to me for Mr. Botherall's speech on the Civil List, saying it was out of print, and that his master was desperate for it, as he had not a copy, and he would give five shillings or more for one to correct for a new edition. Ye may think me soft, Mr. Hyams, but the boy was in such a fluster of credulity anent the importance of a copy, that I was taken in; for although I had all my original six copies unsold, I saw a chance of a spek, and told him accordingly, which was dunkling the truth, that I would see and get him a copy by the morning, since it was a matter of such instancy to his Right Honourable master.

“ Accordingly, the moment the chap was out of sight, before going to the club, I sends far and wide my own laddie to get all the copies of the speech he could among the trade—catch me at such rashness again !—and when I returned home at my wonted regular hour, judge of my consternation at seeing more than seven hundred copies lying in a heap on the shop floor, the edition having been seven hundred and fifty. I thought of the poor Yorkshire clergyman with a sigh; and it was not to seek what I had to say to the whipper snapper of a flunky, when he came next morning, and I showed him his master’s blethers in bundles, threatening if I was not eased of the same, I would tell the whole story in a public advertisement. I had no other way to escape a ruinous loss; but thus, though it looked a black bargain at first, yet, as I had the pamphlets at the trade terms, and insisted on the retail price being paid—it was not in the end so mortifying. What would both Lords and Commons say if booksellers were tale-bearers?—but we ken our trade.

“ However, to make a short of a long tale,

soon after the mournful manner of Dr. Ettridge's latter end, and my shop no' being in a commodious thoroughfare for the sale of new and fresh articles, I began to misdoot the solidity of my schemes, when one day, a prime duke of the realm, a Scotch one too,—surely he was daft!—came in and inquired if I had any auld world works; and from less to more, we had a reasonable conversation about the same, and I seeing he was one of the moths, promised to gather some and take them to his house. Accordingly I did so, and was not ill paid with double cent. per cent. This opened the windows of my understanding, and I looked forth, and I discovered that to deal in ancient volumes was one of the best, as it was the safest line of the trade, requiring no other learning than to be able to decipher the dates of the printing; and thus it came to pass that I have made myself so attractive to you and other men of literate faculties; so I soon flung religion into the bakey,* and politics ayont the fire, and have continued to turn the penny by the wisdom of our ancestors ever since. Some

* Coal-scuttle.

of my friends have thought I should move my shop to a quality quarter of the town, but experience teaches fools, and I have learnt from it the value of this nook, as a nest for auld books. But dear me, Mr. Hyams, I wonder ye neglec your poor needful glass in that way; if ye're no' drowthy wi' hearkening, I can tell you it's my case wi' speaking; so fill again for charity."

CHAPTER XIII.

By this time Mr. Hyams was equally satisfied with his host and his wine, especially as he saw no chance of turning the egotistical loquacity of the old man to the object of his visit. But still intent on not being entirely frustrated, he resolved to make an effort, and which he effected with a briskness that partook more of the style of a cornet of dragoons, than that of the misanthropic bachelor which he had been for so many years.

It is, we apprehend, a vulgar error to suppose, that men who voluntarily sequester themselves from company, amidst the bustle of society, acquire manners more morose than their natural dispositions impel them to assume. Hermits, monks, and anchorites, who retire to

caves, cells, and wildernesses, and engage in the solemn and incessant performance of superstitious rites, may, no doubt, whatever was their previous gaiety, sadden into austerity ; but it is far different with those who remain in the busy world, and yet are not of it : with them no very obvious change takes place—and the laundress, when she mentioned to our hero the remarkable neatness of Mr. Hyams for a person who dressed in black, had only noticed a phenomenon, the philosophy of which she was unable to explain. All his sympathies remained as sensitive as ever—the ridiculous and peculiar excited him with undiminished vivacity, and the modes and usages of necessary intercourse were practised by him with that mild observance of custom, which without obtrusion, is most strikingly characteristic of the tact and delicacy of a gentleman.

“ But,” said he to the Bibliopole, filling at the same moment his glass, “ though it is very evident that your natural sagacity has enabled you to obtain queer peeps into the arcana of the trade, in what way would you advise a young

author to proceed with his maiden endeavours? there must be sleights among book-makers as well as among book-sellers."

"No doubt, no doubt, Mr. Hyams, I see ye have an ee in your neck; but if ye're big with book, and near your time, it's no' the likes of me that ye should take for houdy. Your accoucheur should be of the flashy order—unless it be some kittle quest in mathematics, then I might do—but the impression should no' be above fifty copies."

"That," said Mr. Hyams, interrupting him, "is not exactly what I mean. I only wish to know if it be still the custom for young authors to be introduced to the booksellers or the public by their friends. You know in former times first works were always heralded by sheets of complimentary verses to the author, published in front of his preface."

"Oh no! that's quite rectified: formerly, ye see, Sir, Mr. Hyams, the booksellers never published any thing that was not well certified as to character, by good judges, before they meddled with it; but now they judge for them-

selves, which is the cause of the great straits they are so often reduced to afterwards, before they can get the best of books into vogue."

"Surely you do not mean to say that the booksellers themselves now estimate the merits of the manuscripts offered to them. How can they, Mr. Wooden, considering their education and the manner in which their time is occupied with their business? For example; did you judge of that Essay on Logarithmic Transcendents, which you published the other day?"

"Oh, Mr. Hyams! Oh, Mr. Hyams! was no' that published on the author's account? How could you even me and Logarithmic Transcendents in the same breath? No, Mr. Hyams—never imagine that there is one of the trade within the four walls of London would tig with his wee finger such college clishmaclavers. But we are all glad to get jobs from authors able to pay for them."

"I never question that," replied Mr. Hyams. "But for authors of popular literature—poets, and such like, what is the custom towards them?"

“ If they be popular, the dons of the trade will take them under their wing, of course.”

“ I am persuaded of that: but until they have become popular?”

“ That’s no’ an easy question. If they have friends, and these friends be men of repute—a flash-in-the-pan, new beginner, will risk something on their opinion; but for the most part, popularity is a plant of slow growth; and an author’s best days are commonly past, and his best books laid by on the shelf, before he can rationally look for profit.”

“ There is, then,” said Mr. Hyams with a sigh, thinking of our hero, “ but little chance for a young man whose sole end in becoming author is profit.”

“ There’s none at all—dear me, how could you think there was any?”

“ But if he be a man of genius, original in the way he looks on the world, and beautiful in the manner he tells what he sees—what then?”

“ He will help the trunk-makers—unless he has friends to speak of him, and friends in whose opinion the world has some confidence,—it’s all

a mistake, Mr. Hyams, to think that books, more than any other merchandize, can be sold without advertisement. Good wine, ye'll say, needs no bush; but the quality of the wine must have been tasted. Over and above all, Mr. Hyams, it is not enough that the quality be good, it must have been relished; for I need not tell a gentleman of your long experience, that the best of all sorts of new things, whether books or wines, do not often please at first: the taste of the public must be in a manner educated to enjoy them; and that's a process of time."

"Your remarks are judicious—very, Mr. Wooden, very; and, to let you into the secret, I am not asking all these questions out of curiosity, nor for myself; but I have a friend, a young man of singular talent—"

"Was he famous at his University?"

"I cannot exactly answer that question; but he is able to have been so."

"That's not enough: a young man, who has not had a name among his companions at the College, has no chance."

"And yet, Mr. Wooden, how many authors of the highest fame have had no juvenile cele-

brity!—how many have had no renown till late in life!”

“Just so: when ye say late in life, ye only tell us how hard it is to climb into reputation. Nay, nay, Mr. Hyams, don’t flatter your friend that he’ll find the course smoother than those who have gone before: without friends and trumpeters, he must reckon on small gains. Early profits come of patronage in all professions: renown is begotten of time as well as merit.”

“But I thought the booksellers were now the patrons of authors.”

“So they are, after the authors have established themselves.”

“But it is in the beginning and outset that patrons are most needed.”

“Quite true: but surely, Sir, ye would not expect merit to be patronised till it has made itself known;—ye would not expect a bookseller to patronise a bare lad of genius in an untimely manner. What have the booksellers to do with poets more than the butchers with lambs, or the poulterers with larks?”

“Do they put them to death?”

“That’s very jocose, Mr. Hyams; but to come to the point: unless your friend have friends that can promulgate him, he’ll do but little good. Nobody should be authors that have not a backing in men or money; all trades need capital, and those that have to live by their calling must dine sparely without it. It’s no’ the best books, but those that best sell, which reward their makers. I have heard of a cookery book, that was such a mine of wealth to the publisher, that a topping man of the Row used to call it the Iliad of cocks and hens; for, among other things, it was grand anent poultry.”

Mr. Hyams saw it was needless to prolong the conversation; and, as the bottle was empty, he rose to come away. His host would fain have detained him to partake of another, but the tenour of the remarks had flattened his spirits, despite the wine. That Buxton had difficulties to encounter far greater than he had feared, was evident, as well as that he had himself a delicate task to perform with him—a task which could not be too early undertaken.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHILE Mr. Hyams was spending the evening, as we have described, with the old bookseller, Buxton received an unexpected visit from the Reverend Mr. Ingleton, whom we have already had occasion to mention, particularly as the rector of Errington. The reader is aware that our hero was attached to his daughter, and that among the most painful consequences entailed by the disclosure of his changeling birth, was the obligation under which he felt himself placed to forego the intention he had begun to entertain of soliciting her hand. Independently, however, of this particular cause, which rendered the visit of the reverend gentleman somewhat remarkable, it was in other respects an affecting incident. Mr. Ingleton had ever cherished for

him a degree of paternal affection, and few more disinterestedly lamented the ruin into which he had been thrown. His visit could not therefore be regarded as one of mere civility, or of curiosity, to see how he sustained himself under his misfortune. It was suggested by sympathy and sorrow; and the contrast between seeing him in a garret in the Temple, and in the princely mansion of Errington Castle, was calculated to produce on the old man a striking and pathetic effect.

The winter evening was closed; Buxton had for some time returned from dinner, and was busy at his literary task. A single candle stood nearly before him; his fire, recently re-kindled, was however bright, but it only showed the sordid aspect of the room more distinctly. Behind him two shelves were partly occupied with books, and a few sorry domestic utensils. In one corner stood his bed, and in another a defaced japanned wash-hand stand, plenished with common stone ware. The other furniture was in the same style of penury.

Buxton, in expectation only of the return of Hyams, surprised by the soft knocking, so dif-

ferent from his familiar touch, requested the stranger to come forward, and when the door was cautiously pushed open, the pale grey-headed old man came into the light. Buxton instantly knew him, and eagerly rose to receive him; he was not, however, himself so quickly recognised, for Mr. Ingleton was dazzled by the brightness of the room; but the moment he heard the voice of his young friend, he stood for some time as if he had been thunderstruck, and could only exclaim, almost suffocated with emotion, "Oh, my lord! my dear lord!"

"Come forward, Mr. Ingleton," was all that Buxton could say; and as he led the old man to an elbow-chair beside the fire, he shook like the aspen. But it was not long; for summoning all his fortitude, he mastered the surprise of the moment, and with comparative freedom expressed his delight at seeing him. Mr. Ingleton was, however, unable to reply; he could only look around in silence, and alternately at our hero. After a pause of some time he became more collected, and said, with a tone of indescribable sensibility,

"Thank God! it was no fault of yours."

“ My worthy friend ! ” exclaimed Buxton, “ let us no longer look back. I am doing much to forget Errington, and all the other fallacies that glittered on my early life ; indeed, I can think of them without much regret. How were the family at the Castle ? ”

“ Why, well ; as well as they deserve to be : they are all in good health ; but my Lord has come late to his rank, and it sits uneasy on him. Yes, you have had the advantage in the change, for the marriage was, I fear, too hastily made up. The young Countess had been too long accustomed to think herself but Howard’s daughter, not to overvalue his Lordship’s rank and fortune.”

“ Is it so said ? ”

“ Perhaps not so plainly ; but it is so thought.”

“ Well, we can pass them by. How is Miss Caroline, your own daughter ?—what says she of all this ? ”

“ She never mentions it ; but I am sure you have her sincerest sympathy. Poor thing ! she has of late drooped greatly, and affects solitude more than befits good health. I have brought

her to town with her mother, who grows uneasy at her increasing melancholy."

As Mr. Ingleton was speaking, Buxton evidently ruminated on some absent object, and when the old gentleman stopped, he continued to look as if he had not heard him, and said without noticing how little it was relevant to the subject,

"If it be so, then two are miserable."

"Of whom do you speak?"

The question dispersed the reverie, and our hero rousing himself, said,

"Did you not say, that the union of Lord and Lady Errington had not proved so propitious as the dowager expected?"

"It was of my own Caroline I spoke. But it is thought that Lady Errington repents her haste. His Lordship is a plain and simple character—the country folks say he has inherited with the title and estates the headpiece of the family; but this is in malice, when they think of you."

"It gives me pleasure to hear I am so remembered. But did you say that your daughter was in town?"

“ She is, and with her mother : we fear some malady lurks in her pining. Though Dr. Sorn calls it a maidenly disquietude, which comes of no confirmed disease, but is an ail of weakness bred in the vapours of too still a life ; she stands, he says, only in need of stirring and variety.”

Buxton then inquired for their address, and when he had received it, promised to call in the morning ; but in the same moment he checked himself and said,

“ Pardon me, Mr. Ingleton ; I forget myself. In seeing you, I am put back, as it were, into Lord Errington : I should first ask permission.”

“ So said Mrs. Ingleton, who laid on me strict injunctions to invite you. But our acquaintance is of too old a date to let us stand on ceremonies : all that I can discern between what you are and what you were, is, that this room is not the library of the castle. I shall tell her so ; but it will afflict poor Caroline.”

“ Will it ?” cried Buxton, as if joyously startled ; and he then added pensively,

“ Young ladies count so much upon appearances.”

“It is not so with her,” replied the old gentleman with sincerity; “for many of her moans are about your disasters; but she will be gratified to hear you submit so patiently. I was indeed afraid to find you grown into a whey-faced youth again.”

Something more he was on the point of adding, when Mr. Hyams came to the door; but as soon as Mr. Ingleton saw him, he appeared as much surprised as old Mr. Franks had been, and when invited to resume his chair, he only bowed, and with an air of reserve, quitted the room, followed by Buxton, who accompanied him to the foot of the stair, and wished him good night.

The quick eye of Buxton had noticed the sudden jerk in the surprise of Mr. Ingleton, and they separated with something of restraint and uneasy feeling. As he ascended to his own room, where Mr. Hyams waited his return, he several times halted—an unaccountable awkwardness embarrassed him. He would have been glad had Mr. Hyams not been there. He wished Mr. Ingleton had not seen their intimacy; and yet the more he reflected on the

stain which had blemished the life of Mr. Hyams, his respect softened into a kinder feeling. But morbidly sensible how little he was yet fortified himself to withstand the force of opinion! this feeling sometimes took, as on the present occasion, the acute sense of pity, and he inwardly lamented that one in whom every fresh interview disclosed more engaging qualities should be so regarded by the world as to be a subject of distress to his friends.

Such was the tenor of his reflections as he ascended the stairs; and when he entered the apartment, he was alike grieved and astonished to find Mr. Hyams pacing the floor in violent agitation, and weeping with the bitterness of feminine sorrow.

CHAPTER XV.

“ I DO not wonder that you stand so amazed at seeing me thus affected ;” said Mr. Hyams, after his agitation had in some degree subsided ; “ for although it is only since you condescended to allow me the occasional gratification of your society, that I have for a long period of years found aught that could give me pleasure in life, I yet almost repent that we should ever have become acquainted. There is surely some secret connection between our fortunes : both seem appointed by Providence to lots alike barren—pardon me ; I do not mean to say that there is any similarity in the causes of our respective disasters, but I have been shocked beyond expression, at observing the possibility of being brought by you into the hazard of

meeting again with some of my earliest friends—friends whom to forego for ever, was the cruelest effect of my unhappy doom.”

Hitherto the old gentleman had not resumed his story ; from the morning on which he gave the first account of himself, he seemed reluctant to refer again to that topic—a circumstance which afforded contentment to Buxton, who cherished a dislike to melancholy narratives, and was glad to perceive a gradual restoration of ease approaching to cheerfulness, supplanting the guarded propriety of Mr. Hyams’ general manner. Being so long estranged from all intimate companionship, that gentleman had in fact acquired a habit something like restraint in his demeanour ; gentlemanly, however, even in its formality ; but as he grew more familiar, the freedom of his younger years returned ; he was no doubt become too old to recover the frank and joyous candour of the cornet of dragoons, but now and then a sprinkling of gaiety scintillated in his conversations, as if the pain of his memory was fading in its constancy.

Our hero, surprised at his remark on the

chance of being brought by him again into occasional meetings with former associates, and particularly at the agitation which the momentary sight of Mr. Ingleton had occasioned, inquired, scarcely knowing what he uttered, if the rector was one of those to whom he alluded.

“Not himself,” said Mr. Hyams; “but it would seem that many of the characters in the dramas of our respective lives are the same parties; and of all men I should have wished to shun Mr. Ingleton—not for himself, but for the wounds which his appearance opens afresh;” adding, as if under some occult effect of Wooden’s biographical sketch,

“Let us sit down, and I shall tell you a little more about myself. I have been too sparing hitherto—what passed at my interview with the bookseller will keep to another opportunity; and the present time is the fittest that can arise for the relation I am prompted to make.”

Buxton immediately gave him a chair, and took another for himself, without making any remark: Mr. Hyams continued with affected jocularly.

“To avoid the anguish of many recollections,

I shall, like the lyric poets, burst at once into the subject. At the time when I committed my guiltless felony, I was devotedly attached to a young lady; were I to describe her beauty and her excellences, you would think me drawing from a youthful lover's fancy, and smile while you indulged me. I shall therefore pass all that over—and yet I see her still bright in my remembrance—a star in its refulgent purity—but the cloud covers it. I forget myself, and dream in my waking, like the widowed and the faithful, who are said to behold often in the visions of their sleep the hopes that gladdened their prospects in distant years, animating their fond and young desires again.”

The emphasis of impassioned feeling seldom varied the even unaccentuated elocution of Mr. Hyams, but on this occasion his voice betrayed the deepest emotion, and the wrinkled and flaccid cast of his faded countenance, deriving energy from the subjects of his thoughts, assumed a younger and more vigorous character, such, as may sometimes be observed in the

looks of men remarkable for their sensibility, when they happen to recall to mind the scenes and associations of early life.

“ Yet,” said Buxton, with reference to the intimation which Mr. Hyams had given of the electric effect produced by Mr. Ingleton—“ yet it would seem that he had been at one time influential on your happiness.”

“ No : not so—*that* had perished for ever before I knew him ; if we can be said to know those with whom we have never exchanged words. I have told you of my attachment to Caroline Wimborn.”

“ Caroline Wimborn !” repeated Buxton with surprise.

“ Yes ; that was her name. The fatal folly cancelled an affection, which I believe was mutual ; and though I heard for several years that she never ceased to lament my disgrace—”

“ Did you not inform her of the facts, as you have described them to me ?”

“ No ; I never could muster heart.”

“ Did she believe you guilty ?”

“ I never heard—I never dared to inquire ;

so sacred was my regard for her, that, sensible I had incurred an indelible stain, I could not approach her."

"In that surely, Sir, there was an excess of delicacy."

"Perhaps so; but till you have experienced what it is to endure the averted eye and contumely of the world, you cannot understand the strange decisions of a shattered mind."

"But how in this had Mr. Ingleton any part, that the mere sight of him should so distress you?"

"She is his wife."

"His wife!"

"'Tis even so. Some six or seven years after my departure for India, they grew acquainted, and, to conclude a tale, every syllable of which is as a drop of molten fire in my bosom, he became a thriving wooer, and they were married."

"'Tis wonderful that this should never have been heard of by me at Errington Castle!"

"Not at all; it is an old affair—an event to you like a thing of the past world. The marriage took place long before you were born; and never since my return have I molested

that part of the country, by disclosing myself when occasionally there; the blight that had fallen on the first attachment of Caroline Wimborn has doubtless been long forgotten. It is but remembered by myself, when tired of reading at night I happen to sit in a brown study, creating landscapes in the waning fire."

"This tale breaks on me like a miracle," said Buxton, thoughtfully; and as he made use of the expression, he grew suddenly agitated, and his eyes filled with tears, at the remembrance of his own frustrated attachment, and the fraud of which he had been the innocent victim. There was also a similarity in the fate of the mother and daughter, that awed him, as if he beheld the hand of Providence visibly mingling for the latter the sorrows, disappointments, and bitterness of her mother's cup; for it had been always said that in her marriage she had not been happy. But he soon mastered his agitation, and inquired, with a steady voice, how it was, that not having visited the neighbourhood of Errington, he had become so well acquainted with the person of Mr. Ingleton, who seldom stirred beyond his own parish.

This was almost the only direct question he had asked from the beginning of their acquaintance, and Mr. Hyams looked for a moment disturbed, as if he apprehended that it had been dictated by distrust ; it escaped, however, inadvertently.

“ But I tire you,” said Mr. Hyams, on noticing his absence of mind : “ the night is wearing late, and we shall be in better humour with one another to-morrow.”

“ In truth,” replied our hero, “ I know not that we ever shall.”

“ Sir !” exclaimed Mr. Hyams, starting from his seat, the previous suspicion of his story being doubted kindling into indignation ; in an instant, however, the flash expired, and he said with a soft calm sad accent, “ I ought to have been prepared for this ; I should have better reflected on the infirmity of human nature, and known that the circumstances of my story were likely to make you distrust every incident of my conduct on which a doubt could fasten. But I should answer your question : there are men who, by something amidst the circumstances in which they first happen to be seen, are never

afterwards forgotten. It was so with me. Mr. Ingleton was by the side of her who was still to me the dearest thing on the earth, when I learnt his name: I was near them, undiscovered; and I have several times since seen them together, and on the last time his wife discovered me—but I fled and avoided a scene—”

Buxton, who had been roused by his abrupt manner, ashamed of his own absence, and, grieved at the distress he had unconsciously inflicted, felt himself unable to offer any explanation; but he took him by the hand, and said with energy,

“Forgive me, Mr. Hyams; you think of me in error. Alas! you have probed a wound that I would fain conceal; when you know all, you will then see more reason to pity me, than for the loss of an earldom and friends, and fortune.”

CHAPTER XVI.

IT having been decided that Franks should proceed by a secret route to Vienna, he called next morning on our hero to bid him farewell. We have already stated that he had scarcely despatched his letter to Ralston, respecting his supposed discovery of something in the conduct of Buxton and Mr. Hyams with which he was not satisfied, when he regretted his precipitancy. In warmth of feeling and promptitude to serve his friends, few could surpass this active young man; but the defect in his character proceeded from the rapidity of his decisions, and naturally produced in the re-action which often followed them an inward sense of shame, that made him, by the regret he felt, diffident in approaching

those of whom at any time he had hastily taken up a distrustful opinion. He was, however, of a nature too generous and true-hearted to justify his own rashness, by nourishing sentiments derogatory to the party he considered himself to have judged severely. The effect of this, however, was precisely the reverse of what it ought to have been: it damped the wonted ardour of his manner when they met, and was calculated to impress those whom he was desirous to conciliate by atonement for his momentary lapse, with an idea that he was disposed to loosen the bonds of their mutual friendship. He was himself sensible, to a considerable extent, of this weakness; and that very knowledge had the effect of increasing the ambiguity of his manner.

Towards Buxton he apprehended that he had not been just; and, in consequence, when he waited on him for the purpose stated, that vigilant spirit immediately detected an embarrassment in his manner, which a skinless sense of his own situation led him to consider as some shrinking in friendship; but his letter to Ral-

ston on the occasion will better explain what passed during the interview than any description of ours.

“ London.

“ DEAR RALSTON,

“ I NEVER was so vexed as at this moment : but before relating the cause, let me first tell you that I am about to proceed immediately to Vienna, and by a route which all your geographical knowledge would little assist you in guessing. I leave town this evening for Falmouth, where I shall embark in the packet for Malta, and thence by some opportunity, which I am assured will be readily found there, go to a Turkish port in the Adriatic, and so seek my way northward by what means chance and the usages of the country may place in my power. The mission is of great importance to my father ; but my imagination is more interested in the voyage and the journey than the result, although on it depends perhaps my fortune. All I can say further as to this is, that you may expect to hear from me now and then ; and if I happen to meet with any demon of destiny—ghost, fire-fiend, or water sprite—in the

spectral woods and spiral staircases of Germany, you may expect a full, true, and particular account of the apparition.

“ Besides this reason for writing you at present, I have another, which gives me far more uneasiness than all the perils that by sea and land lurk in the way of honest travellers. You cannot imagine how much I have been annoyed at myself since I wrote you so uncharitably concerning the hidden intercourse between poor Buxton and old Hyams, and yet, unless our friend was well assured that he possessed merits which outweigh his imputed vicious principles, I am convinced he never would have any thing to do with him ;—I call him old Hyams, as the most mitigated expression of dislike, for, on Buxton’s account, I cannot think or speak of him without applying some epithet of distaste or apprehension.

“ This morning I went to pay Buxton a farewell visit, during which the image of Hyams was so constantly in my mind, that it actually had the effect of making me feel exceedingly awkward. I am sure he observed it, and had some conception of the cause, for I saw him

several times glance his sharp eye at me in an inquisitive manner, and once or twice I perceived that he became thoughtfully reserved. He mentioned, incidentally as it were, but on reflection I think it must have been done adroitly, a circumstance that partly at least accounts for his intimacy with Hyams: it was to the effect that he had been attached to Mrs. Ingleton long before her marriage, and that their connexion had been cancelled by a discovery as fatal as that which had ruptured his own affection for her daughter.

“Our interview was hastily abridged, and there was something in the manner of doing it that has left a gritty feeling with me. Buxton excused himself by saying that he had an engagement with Mr. Ingleton, who was in town with his family. Being acquainted with the cause which interested him in them, there was no occasion surely to have made any sort of apology to me; but it struck me that he was rather too polite, and had something more of the peer about him than was necessary. In vain have I since endeavoured to recollect every circumstance by which I could, in the slightest

degree, have given him any cause for coolness ; for his aspect, if the expression may be used, was certainly cool : no doubt, were he informed of the manner in which I had so vexedly expressed myself to you about Hyams, he might perhaps have had some reason to be displeased ; but as that is not the case, his reserve perplexes me exceedingly, and I am much disturbed at the awkwardness it imposes on myself.

“ How can this flaw or fissure between us have arisen ? Towards Buxton I was full of agreeable reminiscences ; I enjoyed the consciousness of having been useful to an amiable and gifted man, overwhelmed with calamity ; but to say the truth, I suspect myself of having been a little overweening in that reflection ; though for the life and body of me I know not how or when. I can therefore only regret that we have parted on a less cordial footing than I sometimes venture to think we should have done.

“ Yours,

“ H. FRANKS.”

The Laird was alone when he received this epistle, and his plain rural notions were unable

to comprehend in what way any dryness could arise between the two friends. But Miss Sibby, who was engaged when it arrived in some household thrift, preparatory to an entertainment intended to be given next day to Mr. and Mrs. Keckle, and their guest, Miss Sorn, now a frequent visitor at the Gowans, made one of her shrewdest comments on it when it was read to her.

“’Deed, Laird,” said she, “I have a notion that Harry Franks is not far wrong in fearing that he may have committed a transgression by an inordinate conceit of his own good works; for by what I know in the old of his lightheadedness, it’s easy to think, how a superior young man, with a lordly spirit, may have met with something at his hands which he could not relish. Not that I would insinuate that our friend Harry has not always behaved with the height of discretion to Mr. Buxton, whom he so well knew was suffering the malady of a bruised heart; but Harry is not overly enriched with the gift of a discerning spirit, or he would have known that those to whom we are kindest, are ever the first to discover an

alienation, even before we are aware of it in ourselves. Mr. Buxton is just the sort of man to sigh at a short coming in civility. But Laird, I must say ye have not a surplus of that commodity yourself, or ye would let him know the pains we are taking here to make Miss Sorn comfortable amongst us ; and that I jealous the hole he made in her heart is fast filling up."

The Laird smiled at Miss Sibby's sly jibe, but said nothing ; nor for some considerable time after was aught heard, either of our hero or of Franks at Gowans, or indeed in all the parish of Greenknows.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN the mean time the condition of Stanley Buxton could not be said to have been in any degree alleviated. There was, no doubt, a pause in the increase of his troubles—no new event occurred to molest him, but his circumstances remained unimproved.

Agreeably to the promise he had made to Mr. Ingleton, as soon as Franks left him he went to return the visit. It was one of mingled friendship and curiosity, which perhaps had not the old gentleman called, he would not have thought of paying, for at this juncture he was averse to the reciprocities of society; and equally studied to avoid and avert all intercourse with former friends.

It has been supposed that on this occasion

he was not so much actuated by a sense of the ordinary duties of politeness, as by a wish to ascertain if the state of Caroline was really such as her father had represented. Other metaphysicians have, however, alleged that the ardour of undiminished passion may have influenced him, and that it was not altogether for so medical a purpose as to inspect the condition of the fair invalid, as to contemplate once more the embodied elegance and beauty which still brightened in his remembrance, and sweetened as with fragrance the only fancies of the past that had suffered no decay. For ourselves, we offer no opinion, as we have his own authority to believe that he was incited by no other motive than a common place wish, to show the family how unimpaired his fortitude had withstood the shock of his fall. On reaching the house, he certainly did acknowledge to himself that he was not quite so firm at heart as he ought to have been ; a weakness arising altogether from reflecting on the incidents which a few months had brought to pass.

On being shown into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Ingleton was sitting alone, he

was surprised to find himself received as if his honours were still unplucked and flourishing.

She was a lady of the gentlest disposition ; and being endowed with a quick and refined tact, she evinced the same consideration for him as when he was Lord Errington. Not prepared for such distinction, expecting as he had noticed in others, more familiarity, he felt his self-possession disturbed, and was on the point in his confusion of saying something on the subject, but at that moment the folding doors behind him opened.

“ It is Caroline ;” said Mrs. Ingleton, before he had time to speak ; and on his turning round, the spectacle that presented itself overwhelmed him with grief and alarm. It was indeed Caroline, ghastly and feeble, seeming by her muslin morning dress, more like a tenant of the tomb come forth in her winding-sheet, than an inhabitant of the breathing world. She tottered in her steps as she came forward, leaning on the arm of her nurse, and attempted to smile as she held out to him her pale and skipny hand,—but such a smile ! it froze his blood, for in the wasted beauty of

her cheek, which he remembered so blooming, the horror of the charnel house was visible, and the momentary joy that flickered in her vivid eyes but served to reveal the presence of a spectre, which disappeared when her features resumed that solemn calm which ever waits upon a fatal disease.

So much was he overmastered by the impression of her appearance, that he stood immoveable, as if he looked upon a visionary apparition; and before he recovered his presence of mind, she had reclined upon a sofa, and the nurse had left the room.

Mrs. Ingleton was the first who spoke.

“ I am not surprised, Mr. Buxton, at your astonishment: she is indeed greatly altered.”

Roused by this remark, he approached the sofa with the intention of apologising for his apparent rudeness, but Caroline again held out her hand, and interrupted him by saying,

“ I was a greater fright two days ago; but were I once able to contend again with the languor that makes me so feeble, I should have little to complain of.”

This was uttered with a tone of confidence,

but it was only the flattery of the disease—an insidious parasite, ever fairest in its promises when most intent to destroy.

Her mother, who anxiously watched the progress of every increasing symptom, turned her head aside, unable to participate in the hope implied ; and, throwing a despondent glance at Buxton, sighed, and, unobserved by Caroline, shed a sudden flow of silent tears.

His agitation in witnessing this little scene attracted the attention of the invalid, who, as if possessing the power to soothe it, looked at him for a moment, evidently intending to rally him ; but in the same instant a sudden anguish, more of the mind than the malady, changed the expression of her countenance, and dropping her eyelids, she said, with an air of constraint and deference,

“ I ought to congratulate you on the equanimity with which you appear to have borne your misfortune : it is some gratification to your friends, for we have never ceased to fear—”

The latter phrase escaped unawares, for before the sentence was concluded she blushed deeply, and left it unfinished.

“ I knew not,” replied Buxton, with ill-assumed gallantry, “ that I had any friends so deeply interested in me.”

Caroline’s confusion increased, but her mother said promptly,

“ Indeed you do us injustice then, for, had we been sharers in your calamity, we could not have felt more keenly.”

“ Thank Heaven !” exclaimed Buxton fervently, “ I have been spared from that ;” and with an emphatic earnestness he grasped the hand of Caroline unguardedly for a moment, and then suddenly dropping it, turned round to conceal his emotion. Mrs. Ingleton rose from beside her daughter, and following him, said, in a mournful whisper,

“ It is too late ; and too late also for me to affect that I have not long ago discovered this.”

Buxton, startled by her words, and not being aware that he had ever before betrayed his secret passion, cried eagerly,

“ What is too late ?” and without waiting for an answer, walked back to the sofa ; but the gentle invalid, without being quite insen-

sible, had fallen into a low lethargy, approaching to a state of syncope, which rendered her unable, if she did observe him, to express her consciousness by any sign.

“She dies!” was all he could utter; and it was in a wild voice, which brought the nurse immediately from the next room; at the same time Mr. Ingleton also entered.

“It is not fatal,” cried the nurse; “she hath but fainted, and already recovers,—apart, and give her air.”

Buxton involuntarily moved several paces, and the old gentleman drew him still further aside, saying,

“Be not so alarmed, she has been so before. It is, they say, a sign that comes from some disquiet of the heart, and denotes no imminent disease. Could we but discover the cause, the doctor says it may not be impossible to reinstate her health again.”

“It is too late!” replied Buxton with a sigh, repeating the expression of Mrs. Ingleton with indescribable sadness; and he then added, “But if it were not made so by her suffering, alas, it is still too late!”

The old gentleman, not apprised of the delicate suspicion of his wife, nor aware of the discovery which had been disclosed a few minutes before, still regarding the fit of weakness as incident to the disease, said, "But come with me, and leave the women to their charge; I have got something to tell you about that Mr. Hyams whom I left with you last night, and it concerns you to know it soon." So saying, he conducted him, with a slight violence, into another apartment.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE reverend gentleman was not a very subtle metaphysician. Though enriched with many amiable qualities, and, in the exercise of his parochial duties, much beloved, he was yet, in the power of observing character, one of the commonest class; and the intellectual stature of our hero was so far above his standard, that he committed the error to which similar men are much liable—that of considering him as greatly under himself. Perhaps this was partly owing to having known him from childhood; for it requires the faculty of discrimination in no ordinary degree to appreciate properly the talents of those whom we have known in very early life; and thus it is that parents have generally a lower opinion of the abilities of their children

than strangers, however much they may over-estimate their moral worth. Fathers are, no doubt, proud of their sons who display talent, but only until they become sensible of their superiority to themselves, and then, oh invidious human nature! they become jealous, and often averse to those they once best loved. Mothers, from the first, are apprehensive of genius, and the prayer of their parental anxiety is to see their children kind, good, and grateful, rather than emulous of greatness or renown. But, in our philosophy, we are forgetting the narrative.

When Mr. Ingleton and our hero had seated themselves in the parlour, the old gentleman, after making some remarks on the womanly troubles that must be endured in all families, said,

“ You will be surprised to hear that I am anxious to caution you in your intercourse with Mr. Hyams. He has a sad infirmity: they say it comes from Nature, and that he, poor man, can no more resist its influence than the charitable to do good. It has cost him his profession and all his friends; and once it brought his life in jeopardy.”

“ Indeed !” replied Buxton, with an accent of more surprise than he felt.

“ It is even so,” continued Mr. Ingleton. “ At that time he was betrothed to Mrs. Ingleton, but, conscious of his fault, after the detection he never visited her again ; and when I became first acquainted with her, she had been several years a widow in her heart in consequence.”

“ She then believed him guilty of the offence with which he was charged—I have heard of it,” said Buxton.

“ Could she do otherwise ?—the fact was proved, nay, confessed, and a jury convicted him.”

“ It was not easy to resist such testimony. But you say he has the inclination in himself ; as it must therefore come more from nature than acquired vice, no doubt he has been often detected in the same misfortune.”

“ Misfortune, Mr. Buxton, do you call it ? Is the venomous tooth of the adder a misfortune ? are the talons and the teeth of birds and beasts of prey things to make us pity them ? are they not rather the very causes that justify us in destroying them ? You alarm me to hear

them spoken of in such ill-sorted terms ; it blemishes the very substance of morality to—”

“ Pardon me,” interrupted our hero, “ I meant it not in palliation of his fault ; but to commit those errors, which men often do, knowing them to be such even in the act, must be felt by the fated themselves with the anguish of misfortune, though the world justly withholds its pity, and shuns them as offenders. Has the infirmity of Mr. Hyams been often ascertained ?”

“ You speak of it in mitigated terms—I have not heard ; but it has wrecked the man. With great opulence, he is totally ruined ; and has no associates but of the merest dregs, and in the lowest haunts. I would therefore warn you that he can be no fit companion.”

“ I am greatly indebted for your kindness ; but what reason have you to suspect him of such degradation ?—for I will not question that guilt which the law has declared, even though no other proof of any similar indiscretion could be given ?”

“ I have my eyes—and I saw him myself.”

“ Yourself !” cried Buxton with a shudder,

for a moment yielding to the possibility of the allegation being true, especially when so avouched by an aged and venerable man, whose pale and temperate complexion was an assurance of probity.

“ Yes : as I have this right hand, I saw him last night prying in filthy places of the city, and amidst the receptacles of the vicious.”

“ But, Sir, how were you there yourself ?”

“ It is a just question. I had occasion to visit in that part of the town a dealer in old books, who with a whimsical pertinacity resides there, and will go no where else.”

“ Indeed ! and might not Mr. Hyams have been on the same errand ? for even the derogatory habit with which he is charged, is not incompatible with higher tastes.”

“ No, no ; think not so lightly of it, my young friend, but rather of the moral that the tale conveys. He has made himself an outcast, and is rejected of the world ; so that, even were he as innocent in being in such a quarter as I was myself, he has forfeited the right to be thought so.”

“ You then condemn him for only being there ?”

“ No : but for his character.”

“ How ! is it then in all things so disreputable ?”

“ It doubtless is ; he cannot have lived so long, banished by his friends, without losing caste ; and I would therefore urge you, as one in whose welfare I take no slender interest, to shun that man.”

“ And yet it is not often that men retain their wonted appearance when their characters have faded, especially those who have become addicted to low courses. What else do you know of this ill-fated person ?”

“ Not much, and I must say it takes the right hand of what I have been saying. He is certainly not void of all commendable feeling ; as he has for many years been almost the sole friend of my wife’s aunt.”

“ Her name ?”

“ Wimborn ; she lives in Glamorganshire.”

“ How ! or in what way has he distinguished her ?”

“ She is his pensioner, and has been so for many years ; but wherefore, no one that knows her can divine. In truth, the poor woman was so much her own enemy, that, but for him, her condition would have been most forlorn.”

“ Perhaps she had incurred the displeasure of her relations ? ”

“ She had ; but to my wife, in childhood, she had been fondly attached ; and it was thought some sentiment which grew from that bespoke his commiseration.”

“ If so, you will allow it is some proof of benevolence. It says, however, but little for those who ought to have anticipated him. They were her relations, and bound by the tie of blood, which cannot be cancelled.”

The old man looked at him pensively for three or four seconds, and then replied with an air of natural diffidence, which however merged as he spoke in the decisive tone of his order :

“ Do you think so, and yet resent so austere the conduct of your own parents ? ”

“ I do not resent,” replied Buxton, somewhat disturbed. “ I but obey the universal law, that bids the young at the appointed time

withdraw from the paternal lair or nest. I feel no obligation in myself to seek that intercourse which other children hold with their parents. When mine so placed themselves that I could not do otherwise than look upon them as inferiors, they should have been prepared to suffer the result."

"And they do suffer, Mr. Buxton," said Mr. Ingleton: "but surely, though you keep aloof from them, the tie between you need not be broken."

"Nor is it; but give me time. There is no other salve for such a recent wound. Hark! what noise is that? It is Caroline."

The old gentleman rose hastily, and with trembling steps, moved to the door, saying as he opened it,

"The child can never know the parent's heart. It is a mystery, and must not be judged by that reciprocal equity which man requires from man."

CHAPTER XIX.

IT had been another attack, slighter, however, than the first; and when Mr. Ingleton returned, our hero came away.

As he walked towards the Temple, his mind was so occupied with topics of a distressing kind, that he passed along without noticing the different objects in his way. The crowd hurried by unheeded; the eager visages of those who were actuated by business or anxiety, attracted no attention; and faces that he well knew, went past unrecognised.

While in this absent mood, and moving, unconscious of haste, quickly forward, he felt his arm familiarly taken, and looking round, was startled to see Lord Errington at his side.

From the time of his abdication, if we may

use a term consecrated to regal use, Buxton had literally scarcely heard even the name of his Lordship; and in consequence, partly from some sentiment allied to pride, recollecting in the instant the barren civility of the letter he had received on the occasion of the discovery, but still more on account of the manner in which, as he was informed, his father had been repulsed when he so injudiciously presumed to apply in his behalf, he withdrew his arm, and with a reserved and distant cold politeness, waited a few seconds as if expecting some communication, and then requested to know his Lordship's pleasure.

The Earl, who had inherited the moderate talents and constitutional diffidence of his family, was abashed at this demeanour: accustomed to have only seen Buxton as his superior, probably habit assisted to produce his embarrassment, for he shrank as it were rebuked, and blushed to the ears with awkwardness.

The tenour of Buxton's previous reflections had not been of a kind to make him more flexible than usual to any man; and he possessed at all times a decision of character which

in the state of his feelings at the moment deserved almost the epithet of stern. But observing the confusion of his Lordship, and recollecting how little cause indeed he had himself to be disturbed by him, his air softened, and with a gentleness that the other felt as gracious and condescending, he expressed his gratification in seeing him look so well, and respectfully inquired concerning the rest of the family; evidently, however, with no intention to prolong their interview. In the interval, Lord Errington had overcome his natural bashfulness, and held out his hand with familiarity, saying, -

“By the by, this is our first meeting, and no wonder it is a little perplexing on both sides; we must not, however, separate abruptly, for I wish greatly to ask why I have never heard from you? It has been the wonder of us all; and the ladies, who have come with me to town yesterday, have sent me to seek you out. I am so far on my way to the Temple on purpose. Come, if you are going that way, let us walk together.”

There was a cordiality in this that Buxton could not withstand; and in the pleasure of

the moment, forgetting the difference in their condition, and recollecting only their former footing, he familiarly took him by the arm. But scarcely had he done so, when he thought the freedom improper, and he immediately changed his position, begging his Lordship's pardon for the inadvertency.

“Why should you not take my arm?” said his Lordship; “there has been nothing on your part that should not make me pleased to be treated so kindly. Pray tell me how it is that you have been so long silent?”

A plain answer to such a direct question would have been to most men, in similar circumstances no easy task; but our hero, now awakened to the full consciousness of his self-possession, replied firmly, but in a manner which implied that he justly appreciated the difference in their respective situations. “In truth, my Lord, I did expect to have heard first from you.” And he added with a smile, which, however, expressed no enjoyment, “I had been so recently a Lord, that I knew not very well how to address myself in a humbler capacity.”

“ But when I told Howard,” said his Lordship, “ that he ought never to expect any favour at my hands, surely that could not cancel my obligations to you : why did you not let me hear from yourself ? ”

In a conversation of this kind, they passed along the Strand together, and in the words and manners of his Lordship Buxton was gratified ; but when they reached the gate of the Temple, he was a little moved when he thought of his mean apartment, and was on the point of making something like an apology, but he checked himself, and said,

“ I was about to beg your Lordship to excuse my sorry chambers, but as there is no reason, in my circumstances, why I should have any better, it is unnecessary.”

As they ascended the stairs, Lord Errington paused several times, and looking back at Buxton, said twice, “ Good Heavens ! ” When they reached the ultimate landing-place, he was still more affected ; and when the door was unlocked, he went forward without speaking, and seated himself in an obscure corner of the room.

Both continued silent ; Buxton not well knowing what to say, and endeavouring to repress a sudden rush of emotion that had nearly overthrown his fortitude. The Earl, in a state of greater sensibility than might have been expected from his character, after gazing some time with a vacant countenance, which indicated extreme sorrow, said,

“ I have been to blame for this ; it should not have been ; it must not be. I wish, Mr. Buxton, you had not brought me here.”

“ And so almost I do myself,” replied our hero, “ for I had not calculated on this effect.”

“ It punishes me severely for my negligence,” said his Lordship, with increasing animation ; “ but I ought to have known it could not be otherwise. Speak to me frankly — what are your means ?”

“ Your Lordship knows them.”

Lord Errington shuddered at this answer ; but, as if to subdue the disagreeable self-reproach which it suggested to himself, he inquired, in a more particular tone, how he proposed to maintain himself during the necessary period of his studies. The inquiry was dictated

by kindness, and Buxton felt that it was so ; but the manner of his Lordship grated on his feelings as in some degree indelicate, so that, instead of giving a direct reply, he evaded the question by one of those general observations which he sometimes employed when desirous to change the conversation, saying lightly,

“ It is the never-ceasing miracle of Nature to be always creating from nothing, and I put faith in the truth—too many in the world are born to no better inheritance than mine, that I should be dismayed.”

“ You are fortunate in one thing at least,” said his Lordship, “ in being able to be so philosophical ; but let us say no more on that head at present. I owe to your honour, Buxton, the power of being able to conceal unpleasant sights from myself, and it will be speedily exerted.”

At this juncture Mr. Hyams opened the door, and looking hastily in, without observing his Lordship, said, “ I shall not be back till the evening, when I hope to bring you good news.”

The person of Hyams was known to Lord

Errington, who had received the same version of his story that old Mr. Franks had communicated to his son, and he was instantly struck aghast at finding him on intimate terms with Buxton. He said, however, nothing; while at the same time he put an unfavourable construction on the nature of his anticipated good news; for it is one of the peculiar infirmities of ordinary minds, where they have cause to doubt the integrity of others, ever to draw evil inferences from their most innocent actions. Buxton, who observed the silent surprise of his Lordship, instantly suspecting that he was in some measure acquainted with Mr. Hyams' character, was for a moment disturbed that he should have come in so abruptly, especially when, after inviting him to dinner next day, his Lordship almost immediately rose to take his leave; an invitation in which the keen discernment of our hero detected an unquiet feeling, materially different from the warmth in which he had previously indulged.

CHAPTER XX.

AFTER the departure of Lord Errington, our hero remained in a very unsatisfactory state of rumination. He thought of the romantic manner in which his acquaintance had been made with Mr. Hyams, and condemned it as youthful, rash, and imprudent. Warned of the consequences, as he had been, by that gentleman himself, his vexation was augmented by that inscrutable doubling of human nature which thwarts our wishes, and prevents us from imputing the blame to others that attaches only to ourselves.

In this irksome mood he sat several hours at his writing-table. His task was before him, and the pen in his hand; but his mind never reverted to the topic on which he ought to

have been engaged: all his thoughts were occupied with the chance of new sufferings to which he had rendered himself liable by associating himself with his tainted companion.

At the customary hour, he went, as usual, to dinner in the hall; and as soon as he had finished his meal, he shrank back again to his chambers, apprehensive of meeting Mr. Hyams, and of being observed as his acquaintance by the other students. His mind was miserable, and yet he often and often said to himself, "Why should I quail in so mean a manner with this fear of being noticed as the friend of an innocent, a superior, and, in all his qualities, a truly noble gentleman?"

He had not long taken his seat again at his writing-table when Mr. Hyams entered. His appearance to the quick-sighted Buxton was striking; for although, to common observers, it might have been thought that his countenance indicated self-enjoyment, to him the sadder wrinkles of uneasy thought were deeply visible under the mask of cheerfulness he had assumed; and this increased his own unhappiness.

Mr. Hyams observed that his mind was troubled with some disagreeable subject, and said briskly:--

“Come, come, these things must not be thought of in these ways.”

“What things?” was the answer, with a vacant stare, as if unconscious of the meaning of the words.

“You must not indulge moping,” replied Mr. Hyams; “for although I have not succeeded in the hope with which I went abroad, I have, in one respect, done much better: in a word, Mr. Buxton, this plan of authorship will not do.”

Without expressing any opinion, our hero looked at him, evidently expecting he would proceed; but the old gentleman became suddenly agitated, and rose to conceal his feelings.

“My chance is, then, but a sorry one,” said Buxton, after a pause: “but Lord Errington has been with me. You did not observe he was in the room when you looked in, and I am to dine with him to-morrow.”

“Then he has been warmer in his kindness than you expected?” replied Mr. Hyams, and

added with a soft low voice, "I am almost sorry—"

"Why, why should you say that?"

Without immediately returning an answer, Mr. Hyams looked at him earnestly in the face, with a cast of anxiety, and said:—

"I shall then have a rival."

"How! in what?"

"In the pleasure of serving you. Pardon me, Mr. Buxton, but my conversation with the bookseller was far from pleasant: it marred my night's rest, and I have been to-day among others of the brotherhood—"

"Are they, too, as unpropitious?"

"All; but it has more than vexed me that I should have thought—"

"Of what?" said Buxton, seeing he hesitated.

"That I should ever have thought of going among them at all; but I fancied you would be better pleased to owe to your own efforts than—"

"Than what!" exclaimed our hero, "what have you done?"

"My duty," was the emphatic reply, impressively delivered.

The style in which Mr. Hyams uttered these two simple words produced an immediate effect, and Mr. Buxton felt a momentary awe ; but, concentrating himself, said :—

“ I beseech you, Mr. Hyams, to use no circumlocution towards me ; my imagination is wild, and ever on the stretch ; I find myself incapable of sober reflection. You have told me what the general world would, perhaps, laugh at : there was a time when I might myself have been guilty of so great a folly ; but your tidings are pregnant with, perhaps, a vital meaning.

“ I have taken a great liberty with your name.” Buxton, whose reflections had been rendered so painful by having observed the uniform effect of their intimacy on his friends, was thunderstruck.

“ I had thought,” said he, coolly, “ that our friendship was to be of an in-door kind. It was suggested by yourself that it should be so : what freedom have you taken with me ?”

“ That which, had I requested your permission, might have been refused. Ah ! Mr. Buxton, I told you of the risk you ran in my fellowship.

There is no ridding ourselves of our human infirmity ; but, not to hazard your displeasure farther, there are certain documents—" pulling them from his pocket—" and to save unnecessary words, do me the everlasting obligation of using them as intended. The life I have led, and my original fortune, enable me to make the settlement. The annuity is yours : no one but yourself, or your heirs, by will, can ever enjoy it. It has pleased the Heavens, in their mysterious sternness, to turn the way of my life to this issue—"

In saying these words, the old man rose in tears :—

" Make me no answer," he continued ; " I can afford what I have done ; but it is no price for the humiliations to which, on my account, you may be subjected. Good night ! Let me hear no remonstrance : when we meet to-morrow, we shall have other topics to talk of."

He then immediately retired, leaving our hero in something like consternation. For three or four minutes he sat in a state of stupefaction, the papers lying on the table before him. At last, he drew them towards him, and

with a careless eye began to glance at their contents. They related to an annuity of a thousand pounds a-year, which Mr. Hyams had settled on him, with power to dispose, by will, of the capital sum on which it was secured. But our pen is too feeble to describe the immediate effect of this munificence on our hero, coming at the moment when every hope seemed to be extinguished, and coming, too, from that quarter in which his sedatest reflections convinced him that his chiefest hazard lay.

As he ultimately decided on accepting this princely gift, we shall not attempt to paint the conflict that he suffered before he determined to do so; but must allow the reader, by the force of his own imagination, to form some notion of the process of reasoning, as well as the course of feeling he underwent in working himself, between pride and necessity, to the proper conclusion.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN the mean time the interwoven destinies of the three friends were working, as Shakspeare says, to a fatal end. The sly insinuation of Miss Sibby Ruart to the Laird respecting Miss Sorn, soon began to derive corroboration from various other signs, besides invitations to the Gowans. The young lady herself came, of her own free grace, often from the Manse, after the early dinner of Mr. and Mrs. Keckle, to spend the evening with Miss Sibby, whom she declared "one of the most conversable of women, especially when her acute remarks were aided and sharpened by the very sensible observations of Mr. Ralston." And he regularly conducted her home in the evening, and, though a Laird, behaved in the politest manner. But her own

account of their nocturnal adventures is so much more piquant and racy than aught our ponderous pen can utter, that we feel particularly gratified in being able to give the letter that relates to the subject.

“ Greenknowes.

“ DEAREST JACINTHA,

“ I HAVE been impatient at your silence. This is my third letter, and you are still ‘ a dumb cascade,’ as the sweet bard of the ‘ Seasons’ calls the frozen waterfall in his sublime Winter. But, were you as fluent as a cataract, you could not gratify the tenth part of my eager wishes and longings to hear all you have got to say, for I am convinced it must be much.

“ Since the agitation which I suffered when that odious man left the neighbourhood, I have begun to taste the sanitary balsam of the Scottish atmosphere, for, though it is not my native air, it is yet scarcely less congenial to my constitution, having been that of both my beloved parents. Exercise has, no doubt, done its part : as often as the fitful wintry weather will permit, I walk abroad in the afternoon, sometimes as far as the mansion-house of Gowans, where I

am solaced with the surprising shrewdness of Miss Ruart, to whom I have introduced you before. She is indeed a lady of unquestionable parts, and when drawn out, as it is called, by the quiet wisdom of Mr. Ralston, she often sparkles with astonishing brilliancy, to which her Scottish accent lends an indescribable something that can be compared to nothing but the rich yellow ray of the diamond, contrasted with the colourless radiance of Parisian paste. In this, however, she shines with a splendour not her own, for unless he is present to reflect her coruscations, they sink like falling stars, that drop into the earth, or are found in the meadows by wandering swains in the morning, distilled into the cold likeness of a jelly.

“Mr. Ralston is certainly a very superior young man, and but that his hair, though not red, is slightly of a sandy tinge, he would be esteemed in any society as good-looking. It is not, however, by his appearance that his worth can be estimated; it is in the circle of the hearth, the domestic sphere, that he sheds his brightest lustre. He is withal amiable and good natured, which is ever an

attribute of strength ; and he is, without being another Hercules, adorned with rude health and robust beauty :—would indeed he were less so ! for last night, when he walked home with me to the Manse, he lifted me over the stile in a manner that could not have been tolerated in town breeding. Altogether, considering the society I have found here, my journey has been most fortunate, and would be without alloy, but for that intrusive person, the mother of one that shall be nameless. She is still with her sister in the village. I have however of late begun to show her that she must keep her distance ; and she cannot but discern that I have at last awakened from my dreams of folly.

“ The more I think of my fondness, Jacintha, the more I am ashamed of it ; but these phosphoric flames are, I suppose, common to green girls, and I was one long enough,—happy now that I can say ‘ was.’ Yes, there is much virtue in that little word ‘ was,’ and not the least I feel of it, is in the consciousness of being free. Free ! ah, fatal flattering confidence ! Am I indeed free ? are these frequent visita-

tions, these nocturnal walks, these over-stepping lofty stiles, where I must lean on manly shoulders, proofs of the soul's liberty? Ah, Jacintha, the woman's tongue betrays the absent heart. But what is the Laird to me, that I should be so haunted with his image; and what am I to him? Ah, there's the rub!

“And so Caroline Ingleton, in the despair of a decline, has gone to London: Poor creature! my heart bleeds for her. There was a time when it was not so, ‘but who can with his fate contend?’ says the poet of the human heart; and I feel the truth, and what it is to nourish a passion with only hope. It is not, however, altogether like that fume of fondness with which I was enchanted before; for there is a spirit in those eyes that are now the stars of my destiny, and it holds unspeakable communion with my heart, making it flutter, and my limbs tremble with silent but oracular promises.

“Yours, &c.

“JULIA SORN.”

It seems pretty evident from this epistle, that Miss Sorn and the Laird were beginning to

be in that state which a philosophical friend of the parties described two human entities to be in, when under the reciprocal influence of animal gravitation; and we are ourselves also inclined to be of that opinion. But the Laird, like the innocent moon, ever drawn towards the earth as the earth is to it, assured Miss Sibby that he was unconscious of any share in their common bias; and he continued to assert this so often, that she, having no experience on the subject herself, began to doubt the accuracy of her own discernment. Mr. Ralston was, in fact, one of those leisurely persons, that could not be greatly moved by single motives; he required at least two, and one of them of a determined quantity in worldly estimation, susceptible of arithmetical proof; and accordingly it was not until that sapient lady pointed out to him how convenient the probable fortune of Miss Sorn would be, if he should ever become disposed to purchase the Waster estate adjacent to his own, as it was the general opinion it would be soon in the market, that Miss Sorn began to improve in his eyes. He had, no doubt,

from the first, been of opinion, that our hero, in rejecting her, had not acted with the profoundest discretion; and sometimes thought that she was not without many attractive qualities; but it was not until Miss Sibby pointed out the possibility of, by her means, making himself one of the chief magnates in the county, that he seriously began to think that a man may soon commit many more imprudent actions, than to marry a handsome young lady with a considerable fortune, even in that mode of computation where the twenty pence English ranks with the pound Scots.

Matters and things were in this crisis, when Miss Sorn revealed that morbid state of her heart to Jacintha; and it so happened, that on the evening of the same day on which she had dispatched her eloquent epistle, the Laird, in conveying her from the Gowans to the manse, informed her that he hoped she would not be offended at his intention of writing to her father.

“And what do you intend to say to him?” said she, with a giggle.

“Only to solicit his permission to apply for this hand;” and stooping with great gallantry,

he would have touched it with his lips; but with affected coyness she snatched it away, and exclaimed with apparent prudery,

“ Oh, Mr. Ralston !”

“ Well, Miss Sorn,” said he coolly, “ if it is not agreeable to you, I need not be at the trouble of writing.”

This took place near the manse; and the young lady not being prepared with an answer, nothing more passed. The Laird, however, saw her to the door, and bade her good night, with a little more formality in his manner than on any preceding evening.

CHAPTER XXII.

“DEAR me !” said Miss Sibby, when the Laird, on returning from his walk, entered the parlour, “what’s the matter? ye’re dreadful ghastly; I hope nothing has been wrong between your joe and you; but really you have the looks of an ill-doer.”

Mr. Ralston made no reply, but threw himself into an elbow chair, and, lifting the poker, began to stir the fire. Miss Sibby, winking knowingly, added,

“I hope, Laird, neither you nor Miss Sorn have met with an accidence?”

“Accident, what accident?”

“That’s a kittle question; but it’s no’ the first time that tender hearts have been playing at picking and dabbing with one another.”

“I am surprised, Miss Ruart, that you let such talk fall from you.”

“Well, may be ye’re only troubled in the region of the stomach, and no’ with the heart, which lies near it,” replied the lady; “but the first glimpse that I got of your countenance as ye entered the room, ye seemed a most humiliated young man. I’m sure had Miss Sorn said she would have nothing to do with you, and given an even down refusal, ye could not have been more like a castaway.”

“No more of that, Miss Ruart, if you please.”

“Well, if it be so,” replied the tenacious lady, “no one can be more grieved than I shall be; for I really thought it was an erled bargain.”

This was said with another sly wink, and the Laird, not knowing what answer to make, rose and walked across the room; but Miss Sibby, as she said herself, determined not to be suppressed, added, with affected gravity, tinted as it were with a slight accent of drollery,

“Compose yourself, my dear Mr. Ralston.

Surely the case is not desperate ; she 'll maybe take you yet."

At these words the Laird turned round, and, with a look majestic, requested Miss Ruart gravely to desist. " I will not deny," said he, " that I did hope there was no insurmountable bar between Miss Sorn and me."

" Nor I, indeed," was the reply ; " is there such a thing ?"

" There is, and I request you will never allude to the subject again."

" Dear me !" exclaimed Miss Sibby ; " and what is that bar ?"

" It is enough that I know it," cried the Laird pcevishly.

" Very true, Mr. Ralston ; but I hope it has not gone to such an extremity that Miss Sorn will desist from coming any more here : what would the world say were that the case ?"

" If a man consult his own happiness he will care little for the opinion of the world. Certainly there is no reason why you and Miss Sorn should break off your acquaintance on my account."

“You astound me, Mr. Ralston. On your account! Have you and Miss Sorn then had a quarrel? perhaps it has only been a lover’s pet: ye must just kiss and make it up.”

The Laird, who had by this time noticed the mocking devil that was lurking in the crowfoot corner of Miss Sibby’s eye, felt himself exceedingly provoked, and said with fervency,

“Your experience in love-matters, no doubt, qualify you to instruct a young man how to woo.”

But the vexatious Miss Sibby, affecting not to notice his wibe at her spinsterhood, said with imperturbable seriousness,

“I’m sure, Laird, all that Experience has taught me is very much at your service, for, by what I can discern in this matter, ye stand greatly in need of a teacher.”

The Laird, unable to parry this thrust, turned on his heel, and walked to the farthest corner of the room.

“Come, come,” cried Miss Sibby, as he walked from her, “let us be serious; I see there has been some outcast between you and Miss Sorn; but it cannot be mortal: tell me

what it was about, and then we can consult anent the soldering."

At these words the Laird returned, and resumed his seat in the elbow chair, and Miss Sibby continued.

"And so what was it about? any thing concerning the settlements? I'm sure Miss Sorn is not of a sordid nature; really, Laird, I would say that I should sooner suspect you than her in any matter of money or matrimony."

The Laird smiled at this rare pun, and replied,

"We had not just come to that point."

"No! then it was in the declaration of your tender passion; how did ye proceed? Was it on bended knee? I'm sure if it was not, Miss Sorn would think ye were not in earnest."

"Why you have guessed like a witch; it was not on bended knee."

"Ah, Mr. Ralston, how could you expect to win such a lady's hand? How were you proceeding?"

"It was evidently not agreeable."

"That is not to be doubted; but 'faint heart never won fair lady;' what said you to her?"

“ I only asked her permission to write the Doctor her father.”

“ I ’m sure,” replied Miss Sibby, after a pause, putting on her best mask of gravity again, “ she could have no objection.”

“ But she had ; and started away from me in the most unaccountable manner.”

“ Indeed ! perhaps she thought you wanted to consult the Doctor : no doubt you had been telling her before that you had a complaint ; did you tell her it was in your head, when you should have spoken only of your heart ?”

“ I could not have been more respectful.”

“ Poo, poo, respectful ! that is, let me tell you, Laird, the most improper manner that can be used to many young ladies. But what said she ?”

“ Just, ‘ Oh, Mr. Ralston ! ’ ”

“ ‘ Oh, Mr. Ralston ? ’ ”

“ That was all she said.”

“ And what answer made you ?”

“ Of course, that if it were not agreeable to her, I would not write the old gentleman.”

“ And to that she said—what ?”

“ Nothing.”

“ Nothing, Mr. Ralston ! and what more ? ”

“ That ’s all.”

“ And so, for that the match is broken off ? ”

“ How could it go farther ? ”

“ Oh, Mr. Ralston, say I : Ye should have clasped her in your arms, and swore ye would love her for ever and ever—Amen.”

“ Was that the way, Miss Sibby, your sweethearts served you ? ”

“ Whenever I refused ; but I never condescended to cry ‘ Oh ’ to any of them ; for that ’s an acceptance. However, keep a good heart, Laird ; it’s a wide rive that cannot be darned. But did you come away when she said nothing ? ”

“ Not exactly ; I saw her safe home : I could do no less in such a dark night.”

“ Goodness me ! what was to prevent you from doing a deal more ? No, no, Laird ; there has been a fault somewhere, and I’ll see to it in the morning ; for really, to speak the words of truth and soberness, ye must not let a twenty thousand pounder slip through your fingers, like an evil spirit.”

“ But what’s the use of troubling oneself

more about her, since it is so plainly not agreeable?"

"Didn't she cry 'Oh?'"

"Well, what then?"

"What more would you have any modest young woman to say on such an occasion? But I'll speak to her myself."

"Not for the world!" cried the Laird, to whom the idea of wooing by proxy, and such a proxy, was alarming.

"Give me, then," rejoined Miss Sibby, "your promise to speak to her again; for really it would be a dreadful oversight, to let such a Godsend, as a fair lady with twenty thousand pounds, sterling money, go out of the parish, because you mistook oh for no; when the mere money, to say nothing of the lady herself, would be so serviceable."

"It is vile, to think of marrying for money, Miss Sibby; I am surprised you should ever deem me capable of that."

"Far be it from me, Laird, to counsel the likes. But marry for both love and money; a man can get no better coal and peat to warm his house with."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE entrance of Miss Sorn into the parlour of the manse was not more riant than that of the Laird to his own home ; but her reception from the minister's lady was not so brisk as that which he received from Miss Sibby. Mrs. Keckle saw she was fluttered ; but although she had some inkling of what might, perhaps, come to pass, she had yet no idea that matters had reached to such a pitch as a declaration, and in consequence, with perfect sincerity, ascribed her molested appearance to some influence arising from the state of the weather.

“ I have a misdoot, Miss Julie,” said she, “ that the winter has now the upper hand of the powers of the air, and that it's not so convenient to be abroad in the cloud of night, even

with good company, as in a sweet-scented summer gloaming. You look disjasket, my dear ; is there any thing of a cordial kind that I can do for you ?”

The minister being at the time in his closet preparing a sermon for Sunday, Miss Sorn had taken his easy chair at the fire-side, and was sitting opposite to her aunt, but made no reply ; on the contrary, she turned her back towards her, and, taking her handkerchief, leant upon her elbow with it at her eyes. Such distress was too obvious to be concealed, and the sympathizing matron rose from her seat, and, moving towards her, continued, as she stood at her side,

“ I am concerned to see you so sorrowful, Miss Julie ; I hope nothing has happened.”

The young lady gave a deep sigh.

“ What is it, my love ?—why are you so cast down ? was Laird Ralston not at home ?”

“ I care not for Laird Ralston,” was the answer, with a sob at the end of it, which served to the oral utterance as a point of admiration does in writing.

“ I hope you and Miss Sibby have had no

difference," continued Mrs. Keckle, "for although she has the best of characters, it's no' to be denied that she has at times a particularity of temper, which makes her as brittle and not so sweet as barley-sugar, especially when she happens to be in the wrong. If you have contradicted her"—

"She is the most benign of her sex," replied Miss Sorn, taking the handkerchief from her watery eyes, and looking askance at her aunt for disparaging Miss Sibby, who, in anticipation of an event deemed by her in the womb of time, was cultivating her good graces with endearing effect.

Mrs. Keckle, having again failed to hit the right nail on the head, paused for a minute, and then said,

"This is the post night; surely you have heard no ill news!—nothing more of the broken-down Lord?"

"I think not of him; no, no, that passion was no ardent flame, but a sparkling, like the cold dew of the morning. These tears flow not for him."

"And whom do they flow for, then?" and she

added with energy, "If I were a maiden, as I am but a wife, he would be a sight good for sore eyne, that my tears would flow for. It's no' possible that the Laird and you have had a misunderstanding?"

Miss again looked ruefully round, and, taking the handkerchief from her eyes, solemnly shook her despairing head in silence.

"I wish, I wish, my love, that ye were my daughter, or that ye would give me leave to advise you as a mother."

"Do, do!" exclaimed the young lady, throwing her arms round the neck of Mrs. Keckle, and bursting into audible weeping on her bosom.

"Then I would take another way with these men. When Mr. Buxton was a Lord, I alloo he was worth the catching, and to take some small pains was no' far from discretion. But the Laird is one that should be treated in a Christian manner, like the rest of the male race."

"Alas! and how is that?"

"As the minister says, example goes farther than precept. When I was a Miss, just come from the boarding-school, Mr. Keckle came a courting in a civilized manner to me; and

really I thought him then a most enticing young man, for he was newly placed in this parish, one of the best stipends in the synod, and I would, but for my excellent mother, who was of a discerning spirit, have soon made it up with him. ‘But, Betty,’ says she, ‘I would not make myself cheap ; let Mr. Keckle, if he wants you, win you.’ At the first I did not see the use of this, and said that if it was ordained that we were to be married, courting was only losing felicity by following a custom. She soon, however, convinced me that no man ever thinks he has gotten a bargain who easily gets a wife ; and accordingly I so deported myself that the minister was more than three months before he ventured to come to the point.”

“ Three months ! ”

“ Ay, three months ; and therefore, from my experience, if Laird Ralston has been at his familiars with you, I would advise you to teach him better manners the next time you meet.”

By this time Miss Sorn had dried her tears, and listening attentively, said, as her aunt paused,

“ And do you think Mr. Ralston is one of those sort of men that require management ? ”

“ All men, my dear, require management : and it is not the way, for a woman to get the upper hand of them, to seem merely their worshippers ; which, now that you have given me leave to speak, was your fault with the Lord.”

“ How ? ”

“ He was a man, as ye ought to have seen from the corner only of one eye, that was not fond of an obtrusion.”

Miss Sorn at this gave a wild short shrill shriek, and clasping her temples with both hands, stretched out her feet, and drummed with such hysterical vehemence on the floor with her heels, that she alarmed the whole house, and brought the minister from his study, and the maids from the kitchen, all in a consternation to ascertain the cause. But before they could inquire, their appearance had the salutary effect of quieting the din at once, and Mrs. Keckle, with great presence of mind, said that it was only Miss Sorn's foot sleeping, which she was trying to waken from its tingling. The reverend gentleman thereupon, without speak-

ing, returned to his lucubrations, and the maid servants (not, however, altogether satisfied with the explanation, for they noticed the traces of grief and tears) returned to the kitchen, where they conjectured and commented upon the comical anguish of a young lady having a sleeping foot, after just parting from her lover.

“Now you have had a proof positive, my dear,” resumed Mrs. Keckle, “of the needfulness of keeping a watch on your own secret. Think what would have been thought had I said, Laird Ralston, though even in a winsome manner, had been kittling you.”

“I see, I see,” cried the fair distressed, relapsing, “the guilt of my folly. Oh! he cannot but despise me.”

“Miss Sorn, I hope it was not you that was the familiar?”

“Alas! alas!”

“What will Miss Sibby think, if the Laird tells her?”

“Oh, I think not of them! My dread is of the beloved Buxton.”

“You stun me! Does your heart lie there

still, while you are setting your cap for a far better man? Really this makes me angry. Were I your mother, who am but your aunt, I would say ye 're a dooble cutty."

"Oh, Mrs. Keckle! Mrs. Keckle! I'm ruined!"

"No' possible! And will the Laird not have you?"

"Stop these cruel imaginations, and hear me."

"To go for to disgrace your father—my brother—and in a manse!—No wonder ye made such a rippetting! Howsomever, we must make the best o't."

"What do you mean?"

"We'll just send you away directly to some place where ye were never known, till all is over, and say ye're gone home. Oh such a trial as this is!"

"Hear me, I beseech you!"

"Oh, ye light lassie! but ye have brought your eggs to a silly market."

"This is dreadful!" cried Miss Sorn, in an earnest tone of common sense, shaking off her habitual affectation; "I am only vexed to

think how contemptuously he must consider me for offering myself."

"Did ye do that? No wonder he was shocked, for the Laird is a moral young man."

"Do not, I entreat you, my dear aunt, allow yourself to be deceived by fancies: you misunderstand me;—you frighten yourself. The Laird but fears I have refused him."

"Is that all?" cried Mrs. Keckle, drying her tears; "that's not a job past remedy; but tell me the particulars.—Stop! hark! it is the minister's step coming again. We must not call him into council until we have determined ourselves what to do. Hush! he's at the door!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

IT must sometimes strike those who observe the progress of individual fortune, that an unaccountable interlacing of the lines of their respective lives may be traced among particular persons, who cannot be said to have more connection with each other, than a sort of general acquaintance. Thus, though it would be difficult to discover any necessary affinity between the destiny of the Laird and that of our hero, yet like two chess players, the one never made a move, without seemingly also constraining the other to follow his example. No two parties could be more dissimilar in their circumstances than Mr. Ralston at Gowans, whose entire sober fate was concentrated within the parish of Greenknowes, and Stanley Buxton,

who was adrift on the world. Still, whatever affected the one, extended its influence to the other. It was necessary that Miss Sorn should be rejected by Buxton, before she could become an object of attraction to the Laird—our task, however, at this time does not require any illustration of those reciprocal contingencies to which we allude; the sagacity of the reader must have taught him to make the observation already. But certain it is, that on the same evening on which the common heart-burning arose between the sentimental Miss Julia, and her homespun lover, leading from the nature of their misunderstanding almost to a serious difference, Buxton and Miss Caroline Ingleton came to the happiest mutual explanations; by which, according to her father, she was rapidly recovering, though her mother said nothing, but sighed as she observed the brightening roses of her wasting cheek.

On the morning of the day on which our hero was to dine with Lord Errington, he had visited the Ingletons, and left all the members of that family alike unequivocally convinced of the state of his heart. But the foreboding

which saddened the mother, admonishes us not to deal lightly with the interview; we shall therefore drop the curtain on the scene between the lovers, and turn our imagination aside from contemplating so dread a spectacle as Death standing with his dart uplifted over the Young and Fair in their fondest anticipations. It is enough to mention that Buxton went rejoicing to his party in the evening, his heart overflowing with gratitude for the generosity of Mr. Hyams.

His entrance into Errington House damped for a moment his exultation. The servants were the same that had been his own, but to the honour of human fidelity, their manner made him pleased:—whether habit or intention was the cause, would be invidious to examine, but they were more than civil in their assiduity, and the one who announced his name on the stairs, hesitated in pronouncing it, and burst into tears.

This incident was a little too much of a scene for himself, and shook his firmness to such a degree, that he was obliged to pause; even when he reached the landing-place, it caused him to

stop, and he could only acknowledge by a look the sense he felt of their attachment.

On entering the drawing-room he was received by the young Lady Errington and her two sisters with unaltered familiarity ; so much so, that he enjoyed himself for a moment as if again at home. They chided him for his silence, and expressed with that kind energy which is ever graceful from the gentle heart, their joy at seeing him. Lord Errington soon after came into the room ; but his reception seemed to the jealous inquisition of our hero, less warm than he had given him reason to expect. But if there really was any deficiency it was more than cordially supplied by old General Turrets, the uncle of the dowager, and Mr. Scrutiner, another relation of the Erringtons.

“ We shall be quite a family party, you see, Buxton,” said the Earl with assumed freedom, and looking round the room, added ; “ But where is her Ladyship ? ” And at that moment the Dowager entered with a visible air of resolution.

Her appearance exceedingly discomposed

our hero ; an instantaneous embarrassment indeed affected all present, and every one unconsciously moved backward, and stood in silence.

Buxton had not imagined that she would be present, and for a short time was not master of himself ; but when he recalled to mind that she was the chief and intentional author of what he could never regard as less than a great offence and misfortune, he resolved to treat her with cold ceremony ; and accordingly, when she threw her eye upon him, and approached evidently with the intention of taking him familiarly by the hand, he made her a distant bow, which at once abashed her ; at the same time he retreated behind her uncle, the General, who was the first to break the solemnity.

“ Well, well,” said the General, “ I ’m glad it ’s over ;” and turning towards the Dowager, added, with a half jocular sneer, “ I see your Ladyship has the courage of our family.” But he was suddenly interrupted, for, wholly unprepared for the collected dignity of her reception, she tottered in her steps, and followed by the young ladies, quitted the room.

“Don’t be disturbed, Stanley,” said the General, addressing Buxton, who stood quivering like the aspen. “This was to be expected; niece though she be of mine, she deserves to suffer ten times more;—I had hoped, that at least for this day, she would have had shame enough to hide her head.”

At this juncture the young ladies returned, and out of delicacy to them, the General abruptly changed his discourse, and inquired if their mother intended to be at dinner. The two elder sisters at once replied, that they had persuaded her not; but the young Lady Errington shrank behind one of the window curtains, to conceal her agitation, and wept bitterly. The General, who seemed to have a just and indignant sense of the Dowager’s offence, went towards the Countess, and endeavoured to soothe her.

“It must not be allowed to affect you in this manner. The worst is, I trust, now over, and by Mr. Buxton coming among us, we shall half disarm the malice of the world. A scene of this kind must sooner or later have taken place somewhere, and it is better that the per-

formance has been here, than before strangers, or in public."

"I wish it could have been avoided," was her reply; "having so long ceased to hold any correspondence with Mr. Buxton, though he was innocent, we ought to have continued strangers."

The General was a man of the world, a keen observer, and one whom the pride of aristocracy made invidious towards his inferiors, but he was also of the strictest integrity, and had, from the disclosure of the secret guilt until that day, abstained from visiting the Dowager, against whom he cherished the strongest resentment for the stain with which she had sullied her family. It was indeed at his suggestion, more than that of the ladies, that the Earl had invited our hero, and the reason which he urged to induce him, was curiously illustrative of his character.

"We must not, my Lord," said he, "allow this story to be oftener in the mouths of the world than is absolutely necessary, nor injure poor Buxton by neglect. If we bring him among us, and treat him as he has really merited, we

shall obtain a good name. But if we cast him off, it will either be thought that he had some share in the fraud, or that we have acted an ungenerous part. Moreover, it has been said that he is studying for the Bar ; we must really prevent him from going forward, for he can never appear there, either in country or in town, without reviving the tale of the Dowager's folly."

But when the General heard the young Countess regret that their acquaintance with Buxton should have been renewed, he cast his eyes on the ground, pursed his lips, a habit he had acquired in cogitation, and, as if some new light had suddenly broke in upon him, after a brief interval, he inquired why she thought so ? looking at her sharply from under his hoary eyebrows. She, however, assigned no other reason than the woman's—

"Because it would have been better."

"Why?" said the old gentleman.

"Because it would."

At this moment dinner was announced, and she took his arm ; but as they descended to the dining-room, and for some time after the com-

pany had taken their places, it was noticed that the old gentleman continued absent, and that when he did recover his wonted ease, he addressed himself to her with an air of compassion. Once after a short rumination, and unconscious of being overheard, he said to himself:

“ I hope we shall have no more sacrifices.”

CHAPTER XXV.

DURING dinner, and while the servants were present, nothing occurred to distinguish the entertainment from the ordinary daily custom of the family. The Earl himself was as brilliant as usual with his common places, and though for a few minutes his Countess appeared disturbed, yet her thoughtfulness did not survive the first course. Her sisters sooner recovered their equanimity, and the elder, with considerable tact, contrived to draw Buxton into an easy dialogue respecting the routine of his life since he had left them, which essentially contributed to restore that comfortable feeling of home, that the objects around all tended to awaken.

The old General was as usual talkative and

facetious, spicing his conversation occasionally with a little satire, and sometimes enhancing its piquancy with a pun; a slight endeavour to be amusingly cheerful was obvious, and now and then he addressed himself in such a manner to our hero, as showed a desire to soothe the irksomeness of his situation. But Mr. Scrutiner, who, previous to the discovery, had been affectionately attached to Buxton, scarcely opened his lips. He was indeed naturally taciturn and sententious, but on this occasion so frugal in his speech as to attract notice. There was also a heavy expression in his eyes, and his noble intellectualized forehead would not have been sufficient to redeem him, in the opinion of strangers, from the suspicion of being dull and lethargic.

Yet this gentleman was no vulgar character; he had lived much in refined society, and had acquired not only a minute knowledge of the world, but possessed from nature a keen perception of those artifices in manners which high rank has necessarily and insensibly adopted, either to mitigate the offence of superiority to the less fortunate, or to protect itself from the obtrusions of the indiscreet. His acquirements

and his talents, without rendering him positively misanthropical, made him in consequence somewhat austere ; but his austerity was singular, for although it might have been expected that the course of his life would have fostered a fastidious humour, it yet had the very opposite effect, and made him regard with distaste the veiled and masqued manners of the great ; and to relish with peculiar enjoyment the simplicity and earnestness of open unassumed character. Still the world did him injustice, for he was almost universally considered among his friends as a haughty and reserved personage, overvaluing himself on his birth and connections, and but little inclined to stoop from his aristocracy, to assist the members of a lower rank. As such he was considered by the shallow Erringtons ; but the plain pride, as he called it, of the changeling Lord, early manifested in boyhood, pleased his taste, and he became, as we have stated, affectionately attached to him.

His presence at dinner was accidental ; he had happened to meet the General in the street in the forenoon, and was induced to come in consequence of being told that Buxton would

be there, and that it was Lord Errington's intention to make a settlement upon him. But the cause of his increased taciturnity, we are unable to explain. It might arise from some apprehension that the favour would unintentionally be so conferred, as to make it too much of an obligation, or accepted, from necessity, in such a manner as to disappoint the high opinion he had formed of our hero in that other sphere where he was less accessible to sordid considerations.

But while the ladies remained at table, Mr. Scrutiner was not otherwise remarkable than as being slightly pensive, and until they withdrew, which, probably in consequence of being tutored for the purpose, they did earlier than usual, nothing took place out of the quiet routine. As soon, however, as the gentlemen had resumed their seats, Lord Errington with a degree of formality that would have been ludicrous in a wiser man—with the air of a chairman at a public dinner, called a bumper, and after a rancid eulogium that made every nerve of Buxton thrill from head to heel, he proposed his health and success in his profession. The ab-

surdity of this mark of distinguished kindness as it was intended to be, grated on the feelings of the General, who soon after said, as if Buxton would have made any oration in return, to prevent him,

“I thought, my Lord, it had been decided last night, that it would be more advisable to assist his promotion in the diplomatic line. It would remove him from the gossiping of London, and spare our family from malicious tongues; and we need it. It is, besides, the most judicious course for a young man of talent who is——”

The General felt himself about to add an expression that would have molested Buxton, and checking himself, said to his Lordship, with an inflexion of displeasure in his voice,

“Come, my Lord, we are here on business. Let us speak freely. Mr. Buxton, you are quite as deeply affected by the disasters which have fallen on us all, as either of us. I will therefore tell you what has been arranged. We cannot, for our own sakes, leave you friendless; we all feel this, and that it is desirable, for the honour of the family, that you should be

induced to withdraw from the eyes of the world: accordingly, it has been determined, that if you would forego the law, and adopt some less conspicuous pursuit, his Lordship would settle a thousand pounds a year upon you; but if you should determine otherwise, having perhaps a natural hope of attaining distinction in the profession, then the annuity would be only three hundred. I speak plainly, for in this statement consists the business we have met to discuss.—Your Lordship will excuse me, but it is not using our friend as he merits, to go about the bush with him.”

Lord Errington, evidently released from his perplexity by the downright dealing of the General, turned with complacency to Buxton to receive his answer:—and Mr. Scrutiner, placing his elbow on the table, and his chin on his hand, sat in a state of curious attention, insensible to the awkwardness of his posture, which was the more remarkable as it was strangely at variance with the wonted propriety of his habits; but it showed how deeply he was interested. Buxton himself appeared for a moment or two out of countenance, but he

soon rallied, and replied with a modest firmness.

“I have no claim on Lord Errington, and justice and integrity must convince him that as far as it has been in my power, I have made all the reparation for an innocent fault that I can make—I even acknowledge that in strict account I am his Lordship’s debtor ; but it is for a debt which it cannot be said I incurred knowingly ; still, what you have stated, General, requires a frank answer, and with all due respect, I beg leave to say, that at this moment I cannot discern wherefore conditions should be attached to the obligation intended to be conferred, until it has been ascertained if the favour will be acceptable at all ; for I consider myself as his Lordship’s pecuniary debtor, and whatever obligation is upon me as such, it is my duty to fulfil.”

Both the Earl and the General looked at one another in some confusion, but Mr. Scrutiner without changing his position, nodded in approbation of the answer.

“But I acquit you of the debt,” said his Lordship, “and I wish to convince you of my

esteem for your character, and how sincerely I pity your misfortune."

"I can only express my gratitude for your Lordship's intentions;" and he added with a smile, to evade the conversation, "but a negotiation where equivalents are to be considered, should not be hastily concluded."

"Good, good!" exclaimed Mr. Scrutiner, raising himself erect; "it is a bargain; General Turrets has fairly offered a price."

"Not exactly a buying and selling," interposed the General, blushing.

"No," rejoined the Earl, "for though we may expect something for the thousand a year, the smaller annuity is all favour."

"What do you say to that, Buxton?" cried Mr. Scrutiner, his eyes vividly resuming their natural animation.

At that moment the countenance of our hero became suddenly overspread with the pale cast of thought, and he was chilled with something akin to fear, when he considered what might have been his feelings during this discussion, but for the generosity of Mr. Hyams. His visible emotion was ascribed by the three

gentlemen to different causes, and the General laying his hand on his shoulder, said—

“Don’t take it amiss; we are all friends, and only seek to lessen the effects of a foolish woman’s folly as well as we can.”

Before, however, any answer could be given, a servant entered with a request from the Dowager, that our hero would come to her Boudoir, when he went up-stairs to tea.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IT is not very obvious that there was much to complain of in the aristocratic indelicacy of the Erringtons. The utmost that can be said of it is, that it evinced a greater consciousness of superiority in station than was exactly beautiful; especially as it was not tempered to the feelings of one who had been accustomed to consider himself not only as their equal, but as their chief; and it would seem that the reserved Mr. Scrutiner thought so too; for as soon as the footman had delivered his message and retired, he addressed himself to the whole party :—

“Take care,” said he, “or we shall plunge into an error. We must not traffic with our friend’s circumstances; it would be equally un-

wise and unkind: nor allure him into the public service by any temptation that may bias his judgment. I fear, Buxton, that neither my Lord nor the General have considered what you may have to endure, if you enter the service of Government, in which the interest of his Lordship, no doubt, can easily find you a place."

"It will be my duty to do so," interrupted the Earl.

"And mine also," added the General.

"But neither can give you connections," continued Mr. Scrutiner; "and place in the state offices, without them, is but as being in a kind of honourable stocks, which the denizens of that class, who regard the Government as their inheritance, look down upon. In other situations, a man has but to endure the common rubs of life; but a plebeian among the equestrians and the conscript fathers, has to bear, besides all these, the contumely of the proud, and the spurns which 'patient merit of the unworthy takes,' as if the right to scorn were an inherent quality of blood, and to be insolent a privilege of birth."

“It is very true,” said the General, “for when I was an ensign, and was thought to be nobody, the Bumpkin gentry, at a race-ball, once elbowed me from their circles, till our colonel placed himself under my patronage, and by taking my arm, caused some inquiry into my birth, parentage, and education. From that time I always took care to put Honourable before my name, till I was dubbed General.”

“And yet,” said Mr. Scrutiner,

“ ‘What’s in a name? The rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.’

No, Buxton, think well what it is to be an unfriended official.”

“Shall I not befriend him?” cried his Lordship.

“You cannot, my Lord, unless your own blood can be tainted by his dishonour, or brightened by his advancement: it must be known that you are interested in him.”

“And am I not?”

“Your reason may, but not yourself; and what is more, nor your family: no official fact is so well known, as that all men dislike those

whom it is their duty to patronize; and therefore it is, that the unconnected, not the unbefriended, (mark the distinction,) are ever lightly looked upon by all the official castes."

"You grow a Radical, Scrutiner," exclaimed his Lordship; "these insinuations are invidious."

"No: I am only taught by experience, observation, and the manifest spirit of the time: do not let us flatter ourselves that we live in the fourteenth century, while we are contending in the nineteenth. But in this controversy we are forgetting the intention and purpose of our meeting:—my opinion is this, if Buxton conceives himself so indebted to your Lordship, as to submit to what the General has said, I say, Very well; but upon my conscience, I do not think the family ought to require a sacrifice from him. Give him what you think proper, but make no conditions."

"It may not be exactly," said our hero, "according to Hoyle, that in this case I should make any remark; but since you have spoken so freely before me, permit me to make one

observation," and he added with some energy in his voice,

"I have acknowledged myself your pecuniary debtor: from circumstances which you well know, I cannot discharge the debt; and I do not wish to stand under greater obligations to your Lordship."

"Then you do decline the offer which, on the part of the family, I have made you," said the General.

"I do."

"And why?" inquired his Lordship, a little more haughtily than was within the proper measure.

"I do not perceive why your Lordship should ask that question," said Buxton in a similar manner.

"Has your gambling friend, Hyams, done so much for you?"

"He has done quite enough, I must say, if your Lordship think it necessary to forget the reciprocal civility which we owe to each other."

"What has he done?"

"Your Lordship will hear when the account

of your debt is sent in ; more I am not in a humour at this moment to say."

The disconcerted Lord Errington had not a word to reply ; but the General, without reflecting on the feeling which had been excited in the bosom of Buxton, said,

"It will be for your advantage to accede to the wishes of the family."

"Perhaps I was so inclined ; but, begging your pardon, what is the family to me ? I happen to regard the Countess Dowager as the author of my irremediable misfortune ; and, really, since I must speak out, I beg leave to say, in terms that should not be misunderstood, that I feel in the whole matter, including the conversation of this evening, it would have been better had we never again met. I decline your Lordship's conditional generosity ; and that there may be no misunderstanding, I decline it more from the manner in which, forgetting my habits, it has been proposed, than my independence of requiring it. Your Lordship will forgive me, but I feel that I ought no longer to keep her Ladyship waiting for me."

With these words he left the room, and both

the Earl and the General continued sitting in consternation ; at last the old gentleman said,

“ He is a saucy ungrateful dog. Did we not intend to treat him as a gentleman ? ”

“ I think not,” said Mr. Scrutiner smiling ; “ if you had done so, you would not have spoken to himself so much like his unassailable superiors.”

“ You take his part strangely,” cried his Lordship.

“ I do, and will do ; and why should I not ? ”

“ He is but a low-born fellow, and has the nature of one ; and I descended when I received him, as I have done, on the footing of an equal,” exclaimed the Earl.

“ Would your Lordship have received any equal as you have done him ? Cousin, cousin, I am reported to be as proud a man as you ; but excuse me, both the General and you forgot to what Buxton has been accustomed, and only thought of him as a servant’s son, to whom you were pleased to vouchsafe some favour.”

“ And all,” replied his Lordship, “ because that greek Hyams has done something for him.”

"No, my Lord, no; we are all at fault," said Scrutiner; "I grudge to say it, but I fear Buxton has got the upper hand of us all."

"How so?" cried the General; "did I not treat him well?"

"Yes; you treated him as you thought he deserved."

"What then?"

"Because he was entitled to better than you thought, and he made you suffer a sense of inferiority."

"You speak of him as if he merited particular consideration."

"I do, I think he does; he has made us all low-minded."

"What then shall we do?" said Lord Erington.

"It is not in your power, my Lord, to consider that question with such a man. The vantage is with him; he has the power of dictating his own terms to your Lordship,—to us all."

"He thinks himself still a Lord," cried the Earl, warming.

"We had better give a night's consideration

to the subject, and take the advice of our pillow," replied Mr. Scrutiner, "before we come to any determination; for let us not disguise the truth to ourselves, he feels that he has not been to blame, and considers the Dowager as the cause of his sufferings, and we have misconceived his feelings."

So saying, and without waiting for a reply, Mr. Scrutiner rose, and the General, with his Lordship, followed him to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE Dowager Lady Errington with a vacillating and capricious temper more than feminine, possessed a masculine vigour of character. Her feelings, her passions, and her words, were always in excess when excited, and to vehement affections she united antipathies no less violent ; but a broad and rich vein of generosity was nevertheless intermingled with her worse qualities. In anger her indignation was boundless, and yet, when the paroxysm subsided, her contrition was equally intense. Such she appeared alike to her family and friends ; towards our hero, however, her conduct was uniform, and as often as he in the slightest degree appeared adverse to her will, hatred would scarcely be too strong a term to describe the combustion of her mind.

During the long period she had feigned to be his mother, she was not only wild and rash, but often impassioned, almost to frenzy, and so constant in her unkindness, that she alienated entirely his filial regard; but from habit and intercourse, something like the freedom of a parent and child unavoidably grew up between them.

But when she had disclosed the bitter secret of the birth, a remarkable change was noticed in her demeanour; she seldom mentioned our hero's name without an epithet of compassion. Every moment seemed to reproach her for the evil she had done to him, and she was so softened by pity, that it was evident her pride alone restrained her from indemnifying him to the utmost of her power. Still, though this transmutation was obvious and easily explained, there was ever something in her manner at once interesting and perplexing, and which baffled the inquisition of her family.

When sitting as she supposed unobserved, they noticed that she occasionally wrung her hands, and betrayed symptoms of an internal suffering which she was anxious to conceal; dis-

troubling expressions would also at times escape from her, in which she lamented the withering of her heart unrefreshed by any hope of being ever able to atone for her crime, as if her fraud had been of that dreadful hue. Her fortitude, however, among the ordinary incidents of life, enabled her to hide the scorpions in her bosom, and many of her general friends, who never witnessed her hoarded writhings, deemed her less culpable than she had been, merely in consequence of the ease with which she artfully affected to condemn her own folly, and the regret with which she spoke of the misfortunes of Buxton.

But though pride, the demon of this ardent and arrogant Lady, stood ever at her elbow, it had neglected to prepare her for the reception she met with in the drawing-room. She remembered the external freedom with which Buxton had treated her as his mother,—but she forgot the constitutional erectness of his character which had been provoked into stubbornness by her importunity for his marriage, and she was in consequence thrown off her guard by the cold and distant ceremony of his salutation. And

when he entered her boudoir his appearance was not such as she had expected. She had trusted that the communication which Lord Errington intended to make, would appease the sternness with which she perceived he was resolutely actuated; but the conversation which took place after the departure of the ladies, was not calculated to abate his natural loftiness, fostered as it had been by those compliances which corrupt the children of aristocracy, and she discerned at his entrance that he was in consequence still farther remote from her control.

She knew that from childhood he was not to be ruled by reproaches, and she now felt herself disarmed had he been so. She also well knew how insensible he was to aught that bore the show of coercion, and that he hardened under it like the iron on the anvil to the hammer; but she likewise knew that he could not withstand the persuasion of tears. She was, however, too sensitive in the movements of her own mind to be able at that time to employ this great lever with effect. She was indeed still so agitated with violence and shame, that her heart was torn by contending passions which

rendered her incapable of exercising her wonted address.

"Come," she exclaimed as he entered, starting up from the sofa on which she had thrown herself, "come, Stanley, take your revenge; behold the visible sense of that double weakness which has ruined us both. Had the disclosure been made in repentance, I had not suffered thus; but it was in the remorse of a darker deed."

For the space of a minute Buxton stood petrified, and then said earnestly,

"These are the words of distraction, Lady Errington; I beseech you to restrain this grief."

"Oh! you know not what you say," she cried with still greater energy, smiting her bosom so wildly with both hands, that he sprang forward and grasped her by the wrists, while she added, "The guilt of my offence, a foul imposthume, is ever breaking out in some new misery." Then suddenly, as if recovering her self-possession, she said, "Poor Maria! believing herself too long your mother's child, has married from obedience."

"I feared as much," replied Buxton; "but

the evil is done, and must not now be thought of with such distraction."

Lady Errington, however, without noticing his remark, cried, "Oh, I have sacrificed my daughter to shame; Jephthah did his in thanksgiving!"

The abrupt and exquisite anguish in which this was uttered, subdued in him every resentful feeling, and roused his sympathy for her distress as he exclaimed,

"Alas! these are terrible allusions; they breathe of a grosser guilt than belongs to your offence."

"They do,—they are."

He had released her arms some time before, and she was weeping, with her face averted; but in saying these words she turned round, and, lowering her voice to a hoarse and hollow superstitious tone, said,

"Art thou the avenger?" and before he could make any reply, her eye seemed to fix on some solemn moving object, which it followed with indescribable terror for about the space of a minute, when, as if awakening from the rapt abstraction of a trance, she appeared

as if released, and added, in a low colloquial accent,

“It is not yet the time.”

Often as Buxton had witnessed the unseemly bursts and flights of passion which she occasionally gave way to, he had never seen her indulge in such disproportioned extravagance, and he became seriously alarmed. He thought her mind overbalanced, and that she magnified the turpitude of her folly into some morbid and mysterious sin: he was the more confirmed in this apprehension by her immediately subjoining, in her conversational voice,

“Take no heed of this, Stanley; my fancy of late sometimes gets the better of me; the fit for this time is now over. Come, let us sit down and talk of your affairs.” So saying, she immediately took a chair, but Buxton, still standing, replied with an emphasis that he could not suppress,

“Lord Errington—”

“Where?” she exclaimed, rushing from her seat.

“I would but say,” resumed our hero, affecting not to observe her horror, “that his

Lordship will tell you himself." Seeing, however, she took no notice of his word, and continued to stare on vacancy, he added with emotion,

"What fascinates you there?"

She made, however, no reply, but broke out into a frightful hysterical laugh, shrill, wild, and unearthly, and fell insensible on the sofa.

Amazed and shuddering, Buxton, convinced of her delirium, rang the bell; but instead of summoning her ordinary attendant, it brought from the next room her own nurse, an old, wrinkled, and grim crone in a mob-cap, covered with black lace, with a staff in one hand, and a light in the other, who, as she came forward, shook her head, and bade him go away, and leave them together; he immediately left the house.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN returning to the Temple the fluctuating reflections of our hero were not enviable. Every syllable of his conversation with the Earl and General was imprinted as it were with fire on his recollection, and as often as he thought of the Dowager with the emphatic symptoms of her wretchedness, he was chilled with fancies allied to dread. Her image would not quit his mind ; as often as he tried to think of other things it came back clothed in a mystery of which he could not divest it.

Yet amidst the resentment with which he felt the insulting condescension of the gentlemen, and which only the munificence of Mr. Hyams had enabled him to repel, he could not prevent the remembrance of his own father and

mother from intruding, nor himself from comparing their composure with the fitful distraction of the Dowager.

This thought glanced and flickered through his imagination, without revealing any subject on which reason could lay hold, or rather which it would venture to examine. As often as the idea of Howard and his wife occurred, eager only to procure an establishment for themselves, he shuddered at the suspicion which the misery of Lady Errington seemed almost to justify, it was so much more remorseful than their disappointed cupidity. Compared with her share of the retribution, theirs was as the blemish of shame to the sufferings of calamity.

Gradually, however, his mind, as he walked along, subsided into a calmer current, and as he passed down the street in which the Ingletons lodged, all other topics of thought were absorbed in reflecting on the condition of Caroline. She had, according to her father's report that morning, improved since his visit ; but her mother could discover no alleviation of her symptoms, only an increase of animation, which but strengthened her alarms.

In approaching the house, he formed an intention, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, to call and inquire for her, but at some distance before reaching the door he was interrupted at the corner of a cross-street by a man coming hastily against him. On recovering from the shock he found it was his father, who, no less surprised at their accidental meeting, stood still without speaking.

“Howard,” cried Buxton involuntarily ;
“you here !”

“It is my misfortune.”

“Where have you come from ?”

“From the North, from Yorkshire, from my brother’s.”

“And where did you leave your—I mean my mother ?”

“She is still in Scotland ; we have not yet been able to determine what we should do.”

The manner of Howard in this short dialogue was unlike that familiarity with which he had first offended. It was sedate, and tempered more to the key of master and servant, than of father and son ; and this difference had an immediate effect on the sensibility of Buxton, who,

having for some time thought of his father only with reference to their relationship, was touched with compassion by his respectful humility, and said :

“ You appear to be in haste, in a different direction from mine, or I would ask you to walk with me.”

The unexpected kindness in which this was said, abashed the poor man to such a degree that he unconsciously touched his hat, as if he had received a favour from his Lord.

“ Come,” continued Buxton, “ come a little way with me; I wish to know something of your prospects.” And they walked on together and had passed Mr. Ingleton’s door before our hero recollected his intention of calling. He then deemed it too late, and they proceeded.

Their conversation related entirely to the affairs of Howard, who having by this time been cured by reflection of the vain dreams in which he had indulged, and taught by experience to form a more just and sober conception of himself and his circumstances, was so affected by his reception, that, scarcely knowing what he uttered, he expressed a hope of forgiveness.

“ Let us not speak of the past,” replied Buxton ; and in the same moment he took familiarly hold of his arm. “ What has been done, cannot now be undone, and it is my duty to forget the cause that perhaps warranted my resentment.”

Howard’s instinctive knowledge of the heart assured him that only some important improvement in the condition of his son could account for this altered behaviour, and he said with address, to discover the source, “ How much it will delight your mother to hear you are so far reconciled ! It will lessen to us all the hardships that have overtaken us.”

Buxton, quickly perceiving the drift of this insinuated question, halted, and half turning round, with the evident design of saying good night, requested him to come to his chambers in the morning.

“ I shall not draw you farther from the direction in which you were going ; but come to me in the morning,” said he, “ and remember, when you do come, that our connection with Erringtons is closed.”

The tone in which this was expressed pre-

cluded reply, and Howard, with a degree of respectfulness that was painful to observe and at the same time recollect their connection, bade him good night.

Scarcely had they separated many paces, when the better feelings of Buxton than his habitual pride revived. He was satisfied with no part of his behaviour to his father so much as in those instances in which he had, during their walk, treated him with confidence; and, as he proceeded solitarily along, he put this austere question several times to himself:

“Why do I bear myself so much like an injured man towards my father? Though his attempt has failed, I must still allow that he deemed it would, if successful, be advantageous to me,—no doubt also to himself. But is he to me more blameable than the father whose necessities obliged him to put his son to an apprenticeship that experience causes the boy to loathe? Yet wherefore rises this mitigated feeling? Can it be from Mr. Hyams’ generous gift, which, by placing me again beyond the reach of want, instructs me not to regard the aspect of my fortunes too much as the scowl of

an enemy? Verily I must look my situation more inquisitively in the face! I would still be a Lord, and from that hankering after the flesh-pots of my false circumstances, I may, perhaps, be growing the architect of my own ruin. What am I, that I should dare to be so proud towards those whom nature and seniority have made my superiors? I am but educated out of my sphere, and can have no privilege to reject my inheritance, whether it be of good or of evil, more than the dwarf to throw down his hunch, or the beauty to assume merit and glory from her endowments."

In these relenting ruminations he continued to indulge; and long before he had reached the gate of the Temple a contrite sentiment softened "the stony" of his heart, and its induration towards his parents the benevolence of his disposition began to condemn.

Previous to this evening he was persuaded that he had just cause to repine; but from the moment that Mr. Hyams plucked him from the slough of despond, he felt a relenting and general thaw of nature, and thought kindlier of the world than, a few hours earlier, he would

have ventured to acknowledge: so sudden and so much are the tides of feeling under the influences of external circumstances.

But though a predominance of satisfactory considerations and intentions made him contemplate his condition with complacency, he was quite aware how different that condition might have been but for the generosity of his blighted friend, while ever and anon the course of these reflections was broken in upon by the remembrance of something more wild and strange in the distraction of the Dowager than he had before witnessed, or she had ever expressed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

When he entered his chambers, our hero found the laundress had only recently lighted his lamp, which stood burning on the mantelshelf; a letter lay on the table, and the candles were placed in readiness; but he neither lifted the letter nor applied the candles to the lamp: on the contrary, he was at the moment so absorbed in himself, that he sat down without heeding either. His appearance, and the posture he insensibly took, indicated that he was agitated with a sudden rush of troubled thought, from which he started with a shudder, exclaiming,

“Can it be possible? Yet in her frenzy even that were possible.”

To what he alluded, we are not meta-

physicians enough to be able to explain ; but he undoubtedly had the Dowager in his mind, for he soon after with extreme anguish, added,

“ Poor lady ! It is, however, but a casual fancy ; and yet, why should this horrible conceit so disturb me ? Let me restrain myself ; it is the very business of the fancy to create such phantasmas when the mind is ill at ease, and mine to-day has undergone conflicting trials.”

As he said this, his eye caught the letter on the table. It was a note from Franks, apprizing him of his sudden return from Gibraltar, where he had found letters which superseded the necessity of his proceeding up the Mediterranean ; and informing him that he would call in the morning to hear what had happened during his absence.

“ This,” said Buxton to himself, “ is an odd accident in my fate ; he comes back in the very crisis ;” and without being sensible of the import of his own words, he subjoined after a short pause :—

“ I have often thought, that in every confluence of unexpected events, there is always

some purpose undiscovered at the time. What can be in these that have so affected me to-night, and in that woman's frenzy, to startle me like a ghost? But the suspicion of my changeling state flashed on my imagination as suddenly. Heaven, in thy mercy, spare me from this apparitional conjecture !”

So saying, he began to undress, and was quickly in bed ; but sleep long refused to visit his pillow ; and when, after hovering on fluctuating wing, she did alight, it was with dreams and incubi, more appalling than the dreadest of his waking fancies.

In the morning he rose earlier than usual, and unrefreshed ; but by the time the laundress came to make his breakfast, he had almost reasoned himself into a persuasion that the alternations to which he had been exposed the preceding day, were the cause of the indisposition which occasioned the visions that had disturbed his sleep. In the very midst, however, of these reflections, Mrs. Ruedens, the ancient nurse of the Dowager, claimed admission.

He well knew the artful character of this

stern crone, and listened to her hyena-like lamentations on his humble apartment with heedless ears; for his mind was wholly employed in wondering what could be her errand. Whether she had been originally admitted into the machination of his birth, he had never ascertained; he thought not: but once or twice he noticed that she exercised an ascendancy over her mistress, quite as obvious as he had observed in the conduct of his father; and that it was of a more intimidating kind. She, however, did not allow him much time to ruminate on the subject, for having exhausted her crocodile tears, she said to him abruptly,

“ Well, that was a sad state in which you left my dear lady; but she soon grew better: this morning she is again charming well, and has sent me to entreat you to come to her. That foolish Earl and her firelock uncle of a general, she says, have spoiled all; and therefore she has taken the business on herself — so you must come. Poor lady, how she sometimes grieves that you were not her son !”

Buxton replied coldly, but civilly, “ that he could not that forenoon wait on her Ladyship ;

but after some argument he consented to call next day, the old woman having alleged that to see him was essential to her peace. Still he could not believe that this was the sole object of her visit; and he was the more convinced it was not, by a remark which she made in a tone of indifference, but followed by an inquisitive look which betrayed its importance.

“She is very unhappy,” said the Nurse, “and often in her raptures speaks frantic words, enough to make black heads white to hear her. I have heard her myself say such things as have made my teeth chatter.”

“But, Nurse, you know she was often violent, and these exclamations were never heeded by those who knew her.”

“True, Mr. Buxton; and I am glad she said nothing to surprise you, but in the ordinary way.”

“Not to surprise! I never saw her so wild before, but on the night I came from Oxford when my Lord died.”

The old woman sat for a moment as it were thunderstruck, but resolutely shaking off her consternation, she added,

“Alas ! she had indeed cause.”

“What cause ?” cried our hero, with an accent of earnestness that almost indicated dread and alarm ; but Mrs. Ruedens was mistress of herself, and replied,

“You know, my Lord died suddenly :—but you must be sure and come to her. She has not been in such a taking as she was last night since that sad accident—did she not rave to you of his death ?”

There was something in this little question that chimed wildly with our hero’s secret thoughts, and made him averse, he knew not wherefore, to prolong the conversation ; accordingly, rising to move the Nurse by his example, he pleaded his engagements for the morning, and repeating that he would call on the Dowager next day, constrained the old woman to withdraw. Before, however, she had actually passed to the stair, he requested her to come back, for she was old and infirm ; at the same time he summoned the laundress to assist her to the foot of the stairs.

“It is a kind thought of you,” said Mrs.

Ruedens, as she turned, and it reminds me what was my chief business in coming here myself so early. Don't tell my Lady of her mad words, for it will put her in a panic again ; you do not think, however, that she spoke much out of joint ?—what said she, that you noticed most ?”

“Nurse, you are inquisitive,” was his answer, with some emphasis. “It was not her words, but her manner, that most affected me.”

“Ay ! you were always a great remarker of things of that sort.”

“But,” said Buxton gravely, “I hope she has no cause for such flights !”

“What flights ?” exclaimed Mrs. Ruedens, in an accent of piercing astonishment.

“Have you not observed them ?”

“Between ourselves,” replied the Nurse, recovering herself, “I fear, I fear ;” touching her forehead significantly ; “but let her make the settlement on you first, and then we'll talk of that.”

Buxton smiled at the naiveté of this at-

tempt to inveigle him in new perplexities ; but the laundress making her appearance, and taking the old woman by the arm, they parted —she, as if her embassy had been a chance of no account; while he went to the breakfast-table with a countenance like a book wherein one may read strange matter.

CHAPTER XXX.

SOON after Mrs. Ruedens had retired, Mr. Hyams came to learn what had passed at Lord Errington's, and formed, from what Buxton related, pretty much the same sort of opinion that the reader has probably done. But the description of Howard's altered demeanour was, to him, not remarkable, for Mr. Hyams, though living exclusively by himself, was not a very acute observer; and the manner of the Erringtons seemed to him so much according to their "order," that he only thought with regret of the humiliation which it was calculated to make his young friend suffer.

Of the violence of the Dowager our hero spoke in general terms; why he should have indulged in any reserve might arise from deli-

cacy towards one whom he had been so long taught—but without learning—to reverence ; or it might proceed from some suggestion which the untimely visit of the Nurse had tended to corroborate.

The matter, however, in which Mr. Hyams took the chiefest interest, related to the Ingletons. From previous conversations, he had begun to suspect the attachment which Buxton entertained for Caroline, but her indisposition made him so far regard it as hopeless, that he avoided the subject as often as he perceived him inclined to be communicative. When, however, he heard the report of the visible improvement which, as her father said, had taken place within the week, he became thoughtful, and soon after went away, saying that he had business in the city that might detain him all day, and in the evening he had occasion to go a short distance into the country, where he might be detained a day or two.

There was nothing in this apology that from any other man would have awakened curiosity, nor indeed did it at the time pass with Buxton for more than words of course. It was only

after Mr. Hyams had retired that the singularity of his having any engagement at all struck him as extraordinary. He was not, however, long permitted to wonder on the subject, for almost immediately after the old gentleman had quitted the room, young Franks came in. But we must refer the reader to the account which that gentleman gave himself to the Laird of their interview, both because it describes the change which had taken place in our hero during his absence, and relates to several little odds and ends on which it would not become our grave historical pen to imitate his lively flippancy.

“ London.

“ MY DEAR RALSTON,

“ Do you recollect a saying of our rattle-headed friend Humphries while at school, who when, as some one was speaking of Sir Robert Walpole’s famous aphorism, ‘ that every man has his price,’ said that if the powers of Europe knew their trade, they would club their treasuries and buy up Napoleon. ‘ Very true,’ replied your acute kinswoman, Miss Sibby Ruart, ‘ that would do, were it enough for him ; but

if not, it would only make him more arrogant, or he would take it and crush them.' Thank heaven ! all his generals have not proved so costly ; by a judicious application of the one thing needful, a correspondent of my father's concern secured the aid of one of the French marshals now in Germany, and we are not ruined. There will be as much, in consequence, snatched from the burning as will serve the old gentleman ; and I only wish that a Miss Sorn would throw herself in my way as the doctor's daughter did in the way of Buxton.

" I have seen him this morning—greatly changed—and I do think for the better. He tells me that he has not made one new acquaintance since we parted ; that his desire is to become estranged from all he knew while Lord Errington, and that the generosity of his friend, Mr. Hyams, has placed him on this agreeable footing. The story he tells me of that curious Excluded is very different indeed from what I heard before, and it may be true ; but we shall see.

" Before I left him he said to me, in rather a particular manner,—

“‘I wish you would introduce me to some of your friends—a taint of the lord still hangs about me, and I shall never be myself while it does.’

“Altogether, there was something about Buxton which showed an agreeable disposition to come down to our level, and accordingly I have made an agreement that he should dine with me, and Ned Bremen, a son of my father’s German partner, and one or two others, this evening. I am glad the proposal came from himself, for I had not bravery enough to make it.

“But there is something about Buxton which I do not well understand ; he is certainly growing, or rather has grown, more like ourselves than he was when I went away, and yet undoubtedly something oppresses the elasticity of his spirits. Ned Bremen is, however, a very surprising fellow ; he has a power which can be compared to nothing but that of the diviners, who, by their mystical rod, discern springs and treasures hidden in the depths of the earth ; in other words, Ned has the tact of discovering the most occult secrets of the human breast,

and I have no doubt he will discover the cause that takes from the candour, which is evidently the natural predominant quality of Buxton's mind. Between ourselves, however, I am a good deal disturbed to find that my interest in Buxton partakes more of curiosity than of that earnest friendship which I certainly felt for him before leaving England. This must be owing to something in himself, for I am none changed; and yet I cannot feel towards him that familiarity which I formerly thought there was no impropriety in cultivating. Ask Miss Sibby, that Pythia of the parish of Green Knowes, for a comment on Rochefoucault's notion, that we have all a pleasure in the misfortunes of our friends, as I am reluctant to believe myself in the possession of any enjoyment derived from the disasters of Buxton; for I am almost sure—mark the qualification—that I was actuated by no other sentiment when I mingled myself with his concerns, than a wish to be useful to one, so obviously requiring a friend; and sooth to say, whose merits and character entirely deserved it.

“I have, however, only seen him for a few

minutes ; and the recollection of the interview has not been flattering to my self-love. I do not say he is reserved ; there is more of system than of natural prudence about him ; and were I deeper in his confidence than I perceive he is willing to allow me to be, I should certainly like him better. No matter, it will all come out by and by, and I shall be greatly disappointed if Ned Bremen do not discover the cause of that something which has so curiously affected me.

“ Sometimes I think that this anxiety about Buxton is very silly, and that I should better consult my own ease were I less to consider his. But there is a spell about the man that binds me to him ; and as often as I feel myself inclined to withdraw from our common intimacy, my spirit receives an admonition, as it were, from Fate, that awes me to abide the issue. However, this attraction which binds me to him in despite of my will, must soon come to a conclusion, and we shall then see what we are all made of ; and that I am ever yours,

“ HENRY FRANKS.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE Laird of Gowans, when he received the foregoing epistle, happened not to be in a humour to take much interest in the concerns of others. Miss Sibby at the time was on a visit to the Manse, on purpose, as she gave out, to consult Mrs. Keckle respecting the celebrated patch-work, which the wetness of the weather for some days had, by confining her to the house, enabled her nearly to finish; but in reality to ascertain, if possible, the extent of the breach between Miss Sorn and her lover. The Laird, who suspected this, though she diplomatically told him only of the ostensible object of her visit, was sitting by himself reading a work rare among country gentlemen, namely, Horace; perhaps he had it only in his hand,

and was looking over the top of it at a Saracen's head in the fire. Be this, however, as it may, when he had read the letter he threw it on the table beside him, and with the book closed between his hands, and pressed together by his knees, he resumed that commercing with the coals, which Milton has omitted to describe as an occupation of "*Il Penseroso*."

The topic with which the Laird was engaged has not been revealed ; but from what we have observed on other important occasions, we are inclined to think that he was computing whether the fortune of the romantic lady would be an adequate consideration for the trouble to which he saw she would subject him in the courting. But whatever it was, his meditations were soon disturbed by the return of his notable kinswoman.

It was now the depth of winter, and Miss Sibby was seasonably apparelled ; she came into the parlour dressed as she was in her walk, with a capuchin hood over her bonnet, a tartan cloak, with slits through which her hands protruded into a muff that might have been the shaggy body of a bear ; moreover, the apex of

her nose was as red as an unextinguished wick, and the rest of her countenance as colourless as a candle.

“Well, Miss Ruart,” said the Laird, pushing back his chair from before the fire, and turning half round, “what have you made of it?” alluding to his own affair. But the lady, ever on her guard, replied with reference to the patchwork,

“Mrs. Keckle thinks that I ought still to make four peacocks with spread tails, and place them at the corners; but Miss Sorn, who has certainly a fine taste, says that a bunch of flowers would be more genteel, and that a pair of turtle-doves billing in the centre, would make it one of the sweetest sentimental bed-covers that ever lay upon two faithful hearts.”

“She is always at her fancies,” said Ralston, “but that is not so phantastical as some of them.”

“She is really a charming creature,” replied Miss Sibby, untying her cloak and hood; “and I am greatly surprised, Mr. Ralston, how you could ever be so rude to her as you were the other night.”

“Me rude ! what do you mean ? I but—and it was with the greatest delicacy—intimated my intention of writing to her father.”

“Now, Laird, if you will let me, I would fain ask you a civil question, and I beg a candid answer.”

“Say on, Miss Ruart ; you know that I am never unreasonable.”

“Well, then, tell me if to tell any young lady come to years of discretion, either like Miss Sorn or me—”

“I thought you were past them, Miss Sibby.”

“Snuffs ! didn’t you give me a dumb promise that I should not be interrupted ?”

“Go on !”

“Then how could you imagine that the way to catch a young lady’s callow affections, as Mr. Bonnywordie the probationer that preached last Sabbath for Mr. Keckle, calls the tender passion, was to threaten to write her father ? No wonder, indeed, that she started away from you with open mouth, and all her fingers spread. I’m sure, if any gentleman that I cherished with true love in the nook of my bosom, had

made use of such an icicle of ceremony to me, I should have fainted cold dead on the spot. Laird, Laird ! you were really to blame."

After a short pause, during which Miss Sibby deposited her hood and bonnet on the table, and her tartan cloak on a neighbouring chair, and had taken a seat by the fire, Mr. Ralston, with rural simplicity, replied that he was sorry to hear he had been so much in fault.

"But you know, Miss Ruart," said he, with sincerity, "that there is a want of something about Miss Sorn, and perhaps she did not rightly understand me."

"Oh, she did that well enough, but you did not understand her, and so at present she's not very worshipful towards you ; but as soon as you can I would advise you to speak her softly, for I'm of opinion, and Mrs. Keckle thinks so too, that with a little curdooing on your part, she's no' a commodity that may not be had."

Thus, from less to more, Miss Sibby succeeded in persuading the Laird that he had himself been in fault for the manner in which Miss Sorn had, as his kinswoman said, turned up

her nose at him. The colloquy between the young lady and her aunt, at the same time, was pretty much to the same purpose.

“It’s very extraordinary,” said Mrs. Keckle, “that in such weather as this Miss Sibby should have been abroad; but she had, as any body with half an eye could plainly see, a purpose in hand. Did you observe, Miss Julie, how she spoke of her patching and the peacocks, and yet was all the time paternostering by the by about the honesty of the Laird, who no doubt is an honest man, that I’ll allow; but to errand her to trumpet his praises to us was not the height of discretion.”

“She’s nevertheless a good soul,” replied Miss Sorn, “though assuredly it would have been more as it ought had the Laird come himself.”

“He’s a stiff-necked Israelite; but if you follow my counsel, Miss Julie, he’ll soon be on his marrow-bones—set him up! to think that by writing to your father he would take infœftment of your tender heart. It was very impudent.”

“Alas! my dear aunt, what would you ad-

vise me to do in such a crisis? for if Mr. Ralston imagines I was in earnest, he may never think of offering again."

"That would indeed be moving, Miss Julie; but I have no fear of the sort, for he'll have clear eyne and bent brows before he'll have such a fortune for the taking in the parish of Green Knowes."

"Say not so, my sweet aunt; surely he's not of the mercenary race of human kind. I would rather—oh! Mrs. Keckle, can you deem him so? I would rather do I know not what than—than—"

"Nay! my love, be not so affected. But for all that, he's a mere man, and ye may wind him round your finger if ye show him what it is to deal with a woman of spirit—so be skeigh to him."

"True; but unless he offers again, it may not be in my power, and what shall I do then?"

"Be on your guard; men are subordinate creatures, as every body well knows by their prideful way of thinking themselves the lords of the creation: if, however, my turn were to come again, I would teach them that we're

their leddies. In short, Miss Julie, if he came to you in a state of contrition, with his hat in his hand, I would listen with the deaf side of my head, and look at him with the tail of my eye."

"But my heart, dear aunt,—my too sensitive heart! Should I not gradually mitigate my displeasure?"

"Lassie, Lassie, ye have not a right notion of your sex's contumacity; trample upon him; look at him as dirt; he'll never have a sensation if ye do otherwise."

"Ah, me! to think that such an amiable young man has not a sensation."

"Julie Sorn, Julie Sorn! I'll not say what I could say; but, put on your pattens, or men will look down on you; what's Laird Ralston, that a woman of a rightful order of mind should irk about? Unless ye cast him down, he'll get the upper hand, and then—oh, woman, woman! thy name is frailty!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN the mean time Franks, with his friends and our hero, had met at dinner. As it was the initiation of Buxton to a class of society he only knew by report, they assembled in an upstairs parlour in a tavern near Temple Bar, where, agreeably to his request, every thing was served according to the most rigid custom of the house. To that way of life Franks himself was not familiar, and to him it had also the pleasure of novelty; but the other gentlemen being foreigners, and having few associates in London, it was in conformity to their daily habits.

During dinner the conversation was only occasional, for the majority were strangers to each other; and the thoughtfulness which Franks

had observed in the morning about Buxton was so increased, that he fancied it could only proceed from indisposition, insomuch that more than once or twice he expressed such anxiety lest it might be so, that he excited the attention of Bremen, who possessed, in the opinion of his companions, a singular faculty in penetrating character. He was, indeed, a gentleman of remarkable attainments, particularly in metaphysics, and of course somewhat mystical ; but he had been educated at Leyden, and his philosophy was in consequence more practical than that of his countrymen in general, and approximated to the Scotch. For the metaphysicians in Germany teach how men should think ; in Scotland, how they do ; and at Leyden, they combine whatever is applicable to use in the systems of both. Thus, without being so exquisitely fine in discriminating the hues, shades, and tones of the mind as a German of equal talent would have been, Bremen was surprisingly shrewd and ingenious in analyzing words and ideas into their elements, and tracing them to impressions on the senses in which he conceived they had originated.

From the moment Bremen's attention was directed to Buxton, he became deeply interested; and at last, with that dexterity which some of the metaphysicians know how to apply, he was evidently fishing for the secrets of his troubled thoughts, and leading the conversation, by the mere association of ideas, to every possible topic.

In this curious inquisition Bremen continued some time, until Franks observed that he thrice reverted to mysterious subjects, as if he supposed the matter of Buxton's thoughts consisted of such things, and that he expressed himself by metaphor and illusion, in figures and in phrases, which recalled images of crime. In this he became so marked that Franks suspected with alarm that Bremen conceived Buxton was meditating some guilty purpose of revenge.

As they proceeded in their various discussions, Bremen, finding himself still at fault in his search, at last ingeniously broached the inexplicable phenomena of dreams, but in so indirect a manner that his art was not perceptible. It might indeed have failed altogether, had not a Mr. Arundale, one of the other guests, hap-

pened to mention that he had heard of dreams so surprisingly circumstantial as to have all the characteristics of reality, and which took possession of the memory as such.

“I once heard,” said he, “the late Admiral Spritsail tell a remarkable instance of this sort. A gentleman of the company was mentioning singular scars on the face of a Captain Haslemere, and described them as the result of wounds which he had received in battle. “They were no such thing,” said the old Admiral gravely,—“they were something very different; indeed Haslemere himself told me all about them, and how they were received. It was on the evening of the second day after good old George the Third was proclaimed, and no doubt it was a very mysterious thing—

“THE CAPTAIN’S CLERK.

“The war was then triumphantly raging in the four quarters of the globe, as the Frenchman Voltaire was obliged to confess, and the Hyena frigate, under orders for the West Indies, only awaited dispatches from London.

Quiller was Haslemere's clerk, a hearty fine fellow, and a great favourite.

“ Having occasion to be on shore, he was to come off with Haslemere himself, and the frigate was to sail immediately after, but Providence ordered it otherwise; for as Quiller was crossing the street a carriage suddenly turned in, and in trying to escape from it he fell; before the driver could pull up, one of the wheels went over his leg; so, owing to that accident, Haslemere was obliged to look for another clerk.

“ The injury was not only serious, but a great disappointment to Quiller, concerning something connected with a brother he had at that time in Barbadoes, but I forget the particulars. However, obliged he was on account of the accident to be docked in Portsmouth. How much his misfortune was regretted by all who knew him, need not be described. By none was it more so than by Haslemere himself; and where was that officer to get such another quill-driver? for in those days, let me tell you, men of Quiller's stamp were not to be picked up along shore.

“ However, it had so happened that for several successive nights the post had not brought the government dispatches, and Haslemere, thinking it might so chance again, resolved before making any inquiry for another clerk, to wait the result of the post. Thus it happened that about the time it was expected to arrive, he went down to the Vernon’s Head, then a flourishing tavern, where Ahab Solomon the Jew has now his ship-chandlery shop; but the house has been since rebuilt, and is no more like the old one than the foretop is like the mizen truck.

“ Well, you see, going to the Vernon’s Head, Haslemere went into the parlour, which at the time was empty, and being tired threw himself into a chair by the fire-side; while sitting there he saw a young man in black, something of the cut of a parson, come in, seat himself at an opposite table, and begin to read the newspaper which was lying before him. He was a sallow man, somewhat complexioned like a blacksmith, and had a mark under the left eye, odd and particular. Haslemere was cool, and could not be mistaken; nor had the King a braver officer;

but he was no philosopher, like the chaps of these days. On the contrary, he had a true-hearted sailor's fear of the Devil, and would not have slept at night in a church—no, not for the kingdom of Heaven.

“After looking some time at the stranger, he thought him of the right timber to make a clerk, and was on the point of hailing him when the post-horn blew, and in the same instant the stranger disappeared; yes, disappeared, by the living Jingo, vanished! There could be no mistake.—I was then a middy,” said the Admiral, “and Haslemere told me the story himself, and how he started to his feet; and though he did not shake in his shoes, he confessed that he was not exactly in boarding trim: so it would have been with the best of us.

“However he boused all tight and went to the post-office; the dispatches were come, and orders also to put instantly to sea. What was to be done? Quiller dismantled! At that moment the stranger whom he had seen at the Vernon's Head hove in sight. He saw him by a candle in a shop-window—yes, saw him again standing before him as steadfast as a figure-head.

“ You know, in good manners he could not address the apparent gentleman on business in the street, but he went straight to the tavern to bid the waiter invite him in, for what could he do without a clerk, having such confidential papers, and the Lords of the Admiralty ordering him to sail directly? But, much to his surprise, the stranger moved on before him, pushed open the door of the parlour, and sat down at the table, lifted the newspaper, and read it as before.

“ Haslemere also took his former seat beside the fire, and putting his dispatches on the flat of his cocked hat, which he laid on a table at his elbow, he turned round, and said to the gentleman in black,—

“ ‘ I have seen you before.’

“ ‘ Yes;’ was the abrupt and brief reply of the stranger, without raising his eyes from the newspaper.

“ Haslemere was a little discomposed at being dealt with in such a costive style, and at that moment he observed his companion had lost the little finger of his left hand, and had a strange mark on the forehead; a scar it seem-

ed at first, it was not however that, but something more extraordinary. Haslemere would never describe it, and always changed the tack of his discourse when questioned about it. I have my own thoughts of what it was;—wern't the devils driven out of heaven by the angels with thunderbolts?—however, not to insist on that fact, I know what I think of the mark.

“ Captain Haselmere after a short pause, again spoke to the young man—

“ ‘ Perhaps,’ said he, ‘ you know where a youngster could be found that would ship to the West Indies as my clerk ?’

“ ‘ I do,’ was the reply.

“ ‘ What ’s his name ?’

“ ‘ Quiller—Henry Quiller.’

“ ‘ Why, that was my clerk’s name.’

“ ‘ I know it.’

“ ‘ Have you not heard what has happened to him ? He has had his leg broken to-night.’

“ ‘ Both of mine are entire.’

“ ‘ Yours ! what do you mean ?’

“ ‘ I am Henry Quiller.’

“ ‘ You ! and will you go with me ?’

“ ‘ I’ll go any where ; I am ruined—lost—lost—gone to perdition.’ ”

“ ‘ My honest fellow,’ said Haslemere, ‘ calm your agitation, your case is not singular.’ ”

“ Haslemere spoke compassionately, and now and then looked at the stranger, whom he thought much older, withered, and wild, than he had at first supposed, and said to himself, ‘ What sort of man is this?’ ”

“ The stranger, as if possessed of some intuitive perception of Haslemere’s thoughts, gave a deep sigh.

“ ‘ He is a broken merchant,’ said the Captain, ‘ but none the less fit for a clerk.’ ”

“ Before he could broach the subject again, the mysterious Henry Quiller looked earnestly at Haslemere, and uttered in the low and solemn emphatic whisper of despair,

“ ‘ I am a merchant.’ ”

“ ‘ I suspected as much,’ replied Haslemere compassionately ; ‘ in what line?’ ”

“ ‘ At first in the spirit line, then a dealer in brimstone.’ ”

“ Haslemere, you may guess, was astonished ; for his former clerk, the real Henry

Quiller, was the son of a man who kept a spirit-cellar in Nightingale Lane, Wapping, and the eldest brother of Henry having settled in Sicily, their father had become an importer of brimstone for the powder-mills on Hounslow-heath, and had a share in the concern with the manufacturers, or was soon to have had, which in a mercantile sense is the same thing as being a partner, especially when credit is to be got.

“ ‘My good friend,’ said Haslemere, ‘many a fine fellow has broken down in his career without having a chance of so soon righting. If you go with me, you will be out of the way of duns, and we may meet with a prize, which, to a moral certainty, we shall take, then your fortune ’s made at once.’ ”

“ ‘Ah, the prize-agents in the West Indies !’ said the stranger. ‘I knew one in Broad Street, his name was Heron Ritchie.’ ”

“ ‘He was my own,’ replied Haslemere ; ‘there is not such a Jew in the power of heaven’s mercy.’ ”

“Just at that moment the stranger assumed the shape and appearance of Heron Ritchie

himself, and poor Haslemere, ashamed of what he had so unguardedly said, was about to make some apology, when that which was so like Heron Ritchie, instantly changed, and took the form of Henry Quiller again.

“‘This is most unaccountable,’ said the Captain amazed, ‘and I must bring it speedily to a conclusion. Here are the dispatches; here also my orders. If this young man will be my clerk, good—if not, hang him.’”

“Captain Haslemere was then about to put the question, when something whispered in his ear not to be precipitate, and, looking at the stranger, he beheld with a shudder, that the mark on his forehead was not as it had been before; while his little finger, which had appeared as simply amputated, was not so, but what was the change that had come upon it, Haslemere never would describe; something, however, no doubt, appeared strange about it, for whenever he spoke of what he had seen, his voice sank into solemnity, and he talked of omens and prodigies, with other fearful words.

“He then thought that the stranger could not be a fit person for a clerk, and regretted

that he had offered him the berth. In this crisis the mysterious young man looked at him, and an inexplicable dread fell upon Haslemere.

“What most perplexed the honest Captain, was the familiarity, like an old friend, with which the stranger regarded him, and winked and made wry faces, and thrust his chin with an insubordinate freedom towards him.

“‘I beg you will sit farther off,’ cried Haslemere, not liking his discipline; at which words the Henry Quiller clapped his thigh with both hands, and presented his knee as a bloody stump in the Captain’s face, and looked as if he were laughing, and yet uttered no sound.

“‘I should not wonder,’ said Haslemere astonished, but nothing daunted, ‘were you to prove the conjuror who has been performing at Winchester!’

“‘You do me injustice, Sir,’ replied the incomprehensible being, and on saying these words, he frowned in the most threatening manner, and then quietly took up the newspaper.

“‘This fellow,’ said Haslemere to himself,

‘is either the conjuror or the Devil.’ Whether the latter word escaped him too audibly, or by what instigation actuated, is impossible to say ; but the stranger instantly rose, and waving his hands over his head, stood in a posture of defiance. Had he been the head of the Ajax man-of-war, he could not have looked prouder ; but in an instant he again changed, and his form became hazy and shadowy, and looked rather like a thing made of blue light, than material flesh and blood. That it was the conjuror Haslemere could no longer doubt, but let me tell you, it was a sight he did not well understand.

“ ‘There cannot be a question,’ said Haslemere, ‘but this transmogrified fellow is a queer article, and will never do for a clerk. The first Lord of the Admiralty could not attempt such a transformation of himself.’ Before, however, the poor Captain could solve the enigma, the blue Devil vanished, and an officer came into the room, and put him under arrest, taking his sword, and in the same moment striking him a fiery burning blow in the face.”

“Good Heavens!” cried all the company,
“what was it?”

“‘A dream, a dream!’ shouted the old Admiral, chuckling, and laughing, and rubbing his hands with delight—‘all a dream.’ Haslemere had tumbled from his chair against the grate, and the scar we were speaking of, was from the wound he had received.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WHILE Mr. Arundale was relating this amusing instance of the accuracy with which dreams sometimes retain time, place, and circumstance, Bremen frequently looked at our hero, as if he expected to discover some effect on his physiognomy, but in vain. He appeared alike solemn and undisturbed as before ; but at the conclusion, when the company laughed, Bremen threw his eyes from under his brows in such a manner at Buxton, that he disconcerted him ; and when the general mirth had in some degree subsided, he said,

“ Undoubtedly these sort of fac-simile visions are not uncommon : I have more than once experienced them myself ; but of all dreams, the most extraordinary are those which

have led to the discovery of secrets. Though it may not augment your respect for me to say so, I have not been without some taste of their horror ;” and turning round, he addressed himself, as it were, in particular to Mr. Franks ; but of all his auditors Buxton was the most attentive.

Whether Bremen observed him or not, we have had no opportunity of ascertaining, but Franks has told us himself that Buxton listened to his narrative with an eager avidity, which was very remarkable, and at last with so manifest and intense an interest that the whole party regarded him more as supernaturally affected, than as one man attending to the narrative of another.

“My experience,” said Bremen, “though it is not dependent entirely on my own testimony, respecting those intellectual disclosures of guilt of which we have been speaking, is sufficient to cure me of all incredulity respecting the veracity of dreams : perhaps others may think me superstitious when I tell the particulars ; but I cannot erase the impressions upon me.

“ THE DISCOVERY.

“ I had completed my studies at Leyden, and, before returning to England, my father permitted me, with my cousin Adolph, to make a short tour in Germany. We accordingly proceeded; but it is not necessary that I should tell the names of all the places we visited, nor how their several wonders gratified our curiosity. It was, however, in the forthgoing a happy excursion; the weather was bland and beautiful; the spring breathed from the hedge and blushed in the orchard; all nature, with youth upon her, revelled in freshness and fragrance.

“ The larks sang with a gayer sprinkling of appogiaturas than usual, the blackbird played his flageolet with the sentiment of a poet, and the flowers looked up with silent smiles of delight. Never was there a sweeter season; the waters sparkled with gladness in the sunshine, and the invisible air was animated with a palpable spirit of life.

“ When we reached Frankfort, on our return, the weather changed; the east wind blew

keen and witheringly ; occasional rude dashes of rain dismayed the genius of the spring, and we were both infected by a degree of lassitude that was all but melancholy ; Adolph more so, however, than I was, complained of what he called an unaccountable indisposition.

“In the hope that a few days would bring round again the same delicious weather we had previously experienced, we agreed to stop a week at Frankfort, not, however, so much on account of the uncomfortable and blighting wind as the state of Adolph’s health. Instead of improving, he grew worse, and on the fourth day was confined to his bed-chamber. Still it could not be said that there was any thing to alarm me in his symptoms, for he was only nervous, and would not permit me to call in a physician.

“One day during this sojourn the weather brightened, and he insisted that I should take a ride into the country, although he did not feel well enough himself to accompany me. I accordingly went a short distance from the city, and halted at an inn on the road side to bait my horse and take some refreshment.

“This inn is pleasantly situated on the banks of the river. A marriage party, which had been celebrated in the neighbourhood that morning, were assembled there and in the garden, enjoying themselves with that quiet cheerfulness for which the Germans are distinguished above every other nation.

“While occupied with my repast, the pleasure of the wedding was suddenly disturbed by the wrangling of several other guests, who formed another company. They had quarrelled, and one of them, a sullen-looking young man, would not be reconciled, but separated himself from his companions, and, taking a seat at a distance, appeared to be meditating some gloomy purpose. The guests, observing him sitting alone, invited him to join them, and, after some persuasion, he did so; but his moroseness had taken such possession of his manner, that he evidently, so long as I was in the garden, had no enjoyment in their society.

“How I happened to notice this circumstance, has passed from my recollection, for I well remember that I was so much engaged with the beauty of the surrounding scenery,

and the songs and glees which the marriage party occasionally sang, that but for what afterwards took place, all remembrance of the incident must soon have faded from my recollection.

“The other guests departed, and, as I supposed, scattered themselves to their respective homes, all except one, the person with whom the sullen fellow had differed so violently; he came back to the gardens, but was not invited by the wedding guests to join them, even though he sat ruminating by himself; perhaps, as he seemed less dissatisfied in his physiognomy than the other, they deemed him not so much in need of being conciliated.

“The company in the garden was in this state when I left it, and returned to Frankfort, where, next day, the news came that the two antagonists had disappeared. They had been left in the gardens and at a late hour, and without having had again any intercourse, paid for their wine, as the landlord said, and retired.

“Why alarm was felt about them would not be easy to explain; but it was, and all sorts of stories told of their quarrel. It was even rumoured, but could be traced to no authority,

that, after settling with the landlord, they had again come to high words and to blows ; that the morose malcontent had pushed his adversary over the bank into the river, and that in horror for what he had done, he had thrown himself in and shared his fate.

“ In consequence of this occurrence Adolph, when he grew better, was induced to visit the scene ; I was little inclined to go with him, but he urged me with a reason that was irresistible.

“ ‘ There is a strange persuasion upon me,’ said he, ‘ that I am somehow connected with this business ; and if there has been a murder, I shall be an agent in discovering the truth.’

“ We accordingly rode to the inn, where we ordered dinner, as we intended to spend the day there ; but before the time, Adolph being weakly, complained of great drowsiness, inso-much that he was obliged to go to bed, where he slept at least an hour. When he returned to me in the garden, I was disconcerted at seeing him frightfully pale, and his eyes preternaturally bright.

“ ‘ What has happened, Adolph ? are you ill ?’ said I, as he entered.

“ ‘ Nothing,’ replied he, in his usual manner ;

‘but I have been scared awake by a frightful dream. That murder is ever running in my thoughts; I am really haunted as if I had done the deed myself.’

“‘Of what have you dreamt?’

“‘Oh, the thing will not bear telling; I cannot imagine how it has so shaken me. I dreamt that I was standing in the garden planting flowers; it was, methought, moonlight, and I beheld the skeleton of a man slowly rising from the ground like an exhalation, until it stood at its full stature before me: you can have no conception of the horror I was in.’

“Dinner being by this time ready, we sat down to it, and our conversation was all about visions, and those apparitional phenomena which puzzle metaphysicians; we then walked into the garden. The air was close and warm—an unwholesome day, but the gardener was still at his business. In passing along we halted to speak to him, when Adolph drew me away; ‘Come,’ said he, ‘I cannot abide that carrion smell; he has manured the ground from the shambles.’

“I smelt nothing, and thought him fanciful;

it was, indeed, the nature of his disease; he had been so from the beginning. In due time we returned to Frankfort, and thence, next day, commenced our journey to Leyden, where we had some small affairs to adjust before finally leaving college. New objects engaged our attention, the undiscovered crime at the inn near Frankfort was forgotten by both, and neither of us heard any thing farther concerning it.

“In the course of the year Adolph settled at Hamburgh, and in the following summer I paid him a visit. It happened among the days I stayed with him that the anniversary of the murder took place; probably we should not have recollected it, for we had many things at the time to think of; but as we sat at breakfast a man came into the room with a basket of ornamental articles to sell. On looking at him, to my surprise, I beheld the sordid, sullen guest, to whom the murder was so mysteriously imputed.

“Without adverting to the crime, I made myself instantly known, and inquired if he had reconciled himself to his friend?

“His reply was open and free: ‘O yes!’

said he; ‘it was no serious quarrel. He is pursuing his trade here in Hamburgh.’

“My amazement at hearing this is not to be described, but I retained self-possession; and after buying a trifle, requested him to bring his friend with him, as I had a particular reason for wishing to see them together; I said so, for his manner was so perfectly natural and easy, that it was impossible to believe that he could have perpetrated any crime.

“He went instantly away, and in less than an hour returned with the other man. I shall not attempt to explain what I then felt: they acknowledged that they had left the garden together.

“‘I was grieved,’ said the gloomy and dull-looking young man, ‘because I had that evening taken leave, perhaps for ever, with irritated feelings, of old companions.’

“‘Nor was I less so,’ said the other, ‘that I had vexed him.’

“This amiable reciprocity accounted for the different humours in which I had seen them in the garden. But when I told them of the story

that was circulated after their disappearance, they expressed great surprise.

“Nothing farther took place: I stayed a fortnight with Adolph, and then came home. Three years passed before we met again; but I sometimes had a letter from him, and in each he still complained of being haunted with an apprehensive recollection of the Frankfort murder. It thus happened that the memory of an imaginary event was kept alive between Adolph and me, and sometimes led to curious metaphysical disquisitions between us, and also some of my philosophical friends. At last Adolph wrote me that having business to transact in Scotland, he would, when it was finished, visit London, and hoped it would be convenient for me to accompany him to Dunkirk, where he had an arrangement to form of importance to his commercial transactions with that town; but when the time came it was not in my power to go with him to France: I went, however, as far as Dover.

“We had arrived there in the morning, and while waiting till the tide served for the sailing of the packet, took a walk under the cliff.

“As we were conversing concerning the business which obliged him to visit Dunkirk, a lady, by dress a widow, came up to us, and inquired which of us was the gentleman going to Berlin. Our answer was of course brief, at which she seemed exceedingly disappointed. Adolph, struck with something interesting in her appearance, offered his services in whatever he could do for her at Calais. This led us into conversation, and, as it was time to return to the quay, we walked back with her together.

“She told us that she had been married to a Prussian officer, who had left her for a short time, intending to visit his relations in Berlin, but that he had never since been heard of. He had been traced to Frankfort, and there he had disappeared.

“We inquired when it had happened, and she mentioned the very day on which that strange affair took place in the garden of the inn, which had given rise to the inexplicable rumour concerning the disappearance of the two men.

“Adolph, without making any remark, looked

significantly at me, and soon after, when the lady left us, said,

“ ‘What we have just heard is very mysterious; some dreadful transaction has been done at that inn. Why should I be so unaccountably troubled about it? The oddness of the coincidences which so unexpectedly recalled the recollection of our being there at the time, begins to assume an ominous importance in my imagination.’ ”

“ I felt as he did, and we continued to talk of it until he embarked.

“ When the packet sailed I returned to the hotel, and prepared to return to London by a coach which was then on the point of starting. The day being fine, I took an outside place to Canterbury. Never having visited that city, I intended to stop there for the purpose of inspecting the Cathedral, so celebrated in your national history.

“ Among other of the outside passengers was a gentleman who startled me when, in the course of conversation, he described himself as a native of Frankfort; he spoke good English, and was settled as a merchant in London. It

turned out that he had been one of the very wedding guests whom I had met in the garden of the inn. The reader may therefore conceive the effect that this information had upon me, so recently parting from Adolph, and wondering with him over the mystery of the widow's husband.

"He perfectly recollected the story of the disappearance of the two young men, and the agitation it occasioned.

"'But,' said he, 'the public anxiety was soon appeased, for their friends came forward and explained the cause. They were taking leave of them to proceed to Hamburgh, where they arrived happily. But we could not conjecture,' said he, 'how the frightful story of the murder and suicide had arisen : it was manifestly a special invention.'

"I then told him the widow's tale, which seemed still more marvellous : but what most amazed us both was the strange confluence of accidents which had so long interested Adolph and me, and by which a clue, as it were, of evidence was guiding us through a labyrinth

to some undivulged crime ; for, though the fact may not redound greatly to the credit of the understanding of either, it is nevertheless true, that the more we talked on the subject, the more firmly we became persuaded that on the fatal night some hideous business had been executed; and let philosophers explain it if they can, we were no less impressed with a superstitious belief that Adolph was destined to the prophetic purpose of discovering the deed and the guilty.

“ At Canterbury I alighted from the coach, and the stranger proceeded by it on to London, after we had agreed that he should write to Frankfort concerning what I had told him, and inquire if aught was still then said of that story which had proved so totally false, but which so many remarkable incidents seemed again to invest with a spectral character.

“ I remained at Canterbury till next morning, and although I visited all the antiquities of the great church and city, I could recal no clear recollection of the things shown, so much were my thoughts riveted with the inexplicable circumstances of the Frankfort murder, for I

gave that name to the unknown mystery, and could only think of it as an event which had really taken place.

“When the Dover diligence arrived in the morning, I was startled to see in it the widow with another passenger. On observing me, she called aloud as to an old friend, and joyously introduced me to her long lost husband !

“This, it will readily be acknowledged, was an occurrence of an extraordinary kind. She had lamented him as many years dead ; she had long worn her weeds with sorrow, and he had returned as from the tomb—returned in the very crisis when Adolph and Mr. Stenhausen, and myself, may be said to have come to the conclusion that he was the undiscovered victim.

“I took my place in the coach beside them, there being no other passengers, and he related his adventures, and how he had been so many years concealed. His explanation was short, but it deepened the mystery, and increased the indescribable curiosity which had taken possession of my mind. One sentence may comprehend all.

“He had reached Frankfort in the night, and went post with another gentleman to the inn so often mentioned. It was midnight when they arrived ; the house was shut : they knocked, and waited at the door for admittance ; the driver in the mean time had driven his carriage to the post-house. The people of the inn were long in answering, and the night air being chill, he walked about a little way on the road to some distance from his companion, when, in passing a dark lane, he was seized suddenly, his mouth covered almost to suffocation, and himself hoisted into a carriage, where two men in military habits laid hold of him, and the carriage instantly bore him away, held fast between his companions.

“Being a stranger, he could not tell in what direction he was taken, but after a journey of several hours the carriage stopped in the court of a desolate castle, and he was told that an attendant would come to him presently. In that castle, and in the custody of an old deaf invalid, he had remained a constant prisoner till about a fortnight previous, when he was as mysteriously set free.

“This was, no doubt, a very singular adventure, so much so that no one can be surprised to hear I did not believe a word of it; not, however, so much on account of its singularity, as from the manner in which it was related, and from the different versions he gave at different times of some of the incidents, which I purposely re-questioned him about,—it seemed to me that the whole story was an invention, in the melo-dramatic style of the Teutonic imagination, but I affected the sincerest credulity to it all. I had taken a dislike to the man, and had he told me of even the commonest probability, I do believe I should have listened with distrust. The effect of this feeling restrained me from saying any thing respecting the other mystery which so greatly occupied my own thoughts, and I sat silent, exchanging only a few common-place words till we reached Rochester, where the beauty of the day enticed me again to mount on the outside.

“Several persons from Paris were among the passengers, and one of them was telling the others of some accident that had happened at the launch of a man-of-war at Toulon when he

was present, and added, that the gentleman, with the lady inside, was there at the same time.

“ ‘How long since?’ said I, eagerly.

“ ‘Last year,’ was the reply.

“ ‘Last year!’ cried I astonished; ‘you must be under some mistake; the gentleman could not have been there.’

“ ‘I am under none,’ was the answer; ‘he resides at Toulon, his wife lives there; I know him well by sight; we came to Paris in the same diligence, but he went on to Calais in another.’

“ ‘This ratified my antipathy to the Prussian, for, besides his criminality in having another wife, there was an obvious mystery over him of a darker shadow, and it was connected with Frankfort and that strange night.

“ ‘Could he,’ said I to myself, ‘have aught to do with the hideous story of the murder and suicide?’ and this question I repeated several times to myself till we reached Gravesend, where, with a determined resolution to sift him with all my ingenuity, I resumed my place in the inside.

“For some time nothing particular occurred ; other passengers had come in, and we travelled with the customary easy conversation ; but I was burning with impatience to address him impressively ; nothing, however, took place until we reached Blackheath, when, owing to some incidental remark respecting a trial of ordnance, by one of the other passengers, I observed to the Prussian that it resembled the accident he had seen last year at Toulon.

“He was an individual of a masterly command of feature, but when I mentioned the circumstance, he was visibly troubled, and it was impossible to believe now one word of his story. I cannot, however, say that I was surprised he should affect not to understand me, but I saw he was afraid.

“As we proceeded towards town, the conversation of the passengers became more desultory ; but, as if it were by accident, I reminded him that I recollected the night of the day on which he arrived at Frankfort was the self-same night on which it was said an inexplicable murder had been committed, for which, however, there was not the least foundation ; and recounting some

of the circumstances as already related, I said to him, in a tone of jocularitv, that I hoped he was not concerned in it, alluding to his story.

“He became greatly agitated, the rim of his nostrils quivered, his under-lip fluttered, he fetched his breath in long respirations, and looked strangely around without object.

“‘Merciful Heaven!’ said I inwardly, ‘can this person have done the deed?’ and yet I was thinking of an imaginary event, which there was no reason to believe had ever been committed, and to which I had only an indescribable antipathy to justify the uncharitable construction which my mind assumed against the man; but still I could not shake off the feeling that prompted the frightful suggestion, even while my reason condemned it as alike unjust and fantastical. I was, however, no longer master of my will. I felt impelled by an extraordinary energy to persuade myself of two things; first, that something awful had been done; and second, that the Prussian was concerned in it.

“That he was in Toulon when he pretended to be imprisoned in the old castle on the banks of the Rhine, I had no doubt; and that he was

at the inn near Frankfort on the night in which I was most interested I could as little dispute ; but I said to myself, ‘What is he?’ and the answer to that question convinced me that I was striving with unavailing conjectures.

“When we arrived at the Golden Cross, Charing Cross, I took my leave of the coach in a solemn, but unsatisfied state of mind, wishing that I might never again fall in with that Prussian.

“In the course of a few days after I received a letter from Adolph, in which, after some matters of business, he subjoined :—

“‘I am really afflicted with that Frankfort mystery ; I dreamt last night that I was in the garden of the inn ; every thing around seemed in the same condition as when we were there together. The soil where we saw the gardener at work was recently turned, but in one corner I beheld an open grave, and in it lay a skeleton whose bones appeared radiant as if they had been made of light.’

“This striking intimation seemed in accordance with my own uneasy reflections, and I thought the shining skeleton indicated some

approaching disclosure ; nor was I mistaken, for, urged by that irresistible impulse which was upon me, I went immediately to the counting-house of Mr. Stenhausen, to inquire what answer he had received from his friends in Frankfort.

“ ‘I have a letter this morning,’ said he with solemnity ; ‘this is a dreadful affair, and I was coming to consult you as to what ought to be done. The story of the murder had long since entirely died away, but Professor Stulz of Idlensberg, who is at present in Frankfort, and was at dinner with my father when my letter was received, rebutted the derision with which my brother ridiculed my faith in prodigies. Next day they went to the inn, and the Professor ordered the ground to be opened ; a skeleton has been found,—a man who appears to have been buried in his clothes, for his buttons were in the grave, but much corroded ; a golden brooch, however, that he probably wore in his breast, has been found. My brother has sent it by a gentleman who is now on his way to London.’

“ ‘It at once occurred to me that the Prussian

was the murderer. I related to Mr. Stenhausen what I had heard and seen about him, and he came to the same conclusion.

“By the first post Mr. Stenhausen again wrote on the subject to his father, and suggested that some inquiry should be instituted, to ascertain if on the fatal night any person had come at a late hour to the inn. I wrote also to Adolph, who was still at Dunkirk, and on receiving my letter he came immediately to Calais, with the intention of crossing to England.

“While standing on the quay at Calais along with other travellers, he fell into conversation with them, and mentioned the wonderful revelation that had been made to him and others of the hidden murder.

“‘Here is the brooch,’ exclaimed the gentleman who was entrusted with it, and who happened to be also there waiting for the tide. Adolph told me when we met that it is impossible to paint the consternation with which all present were seized.

“In the mean time Mr. Stenhausen and myself severally endeavoured to discover the

Prussian without success. But it was so evident that the lidless eye of justice was upon his guilt, that we entertained no doubt of his detection, and agreed to allow him to be overtaken by his fate in whatever way Providence might be pleased to direct.

“That same evening Adolph came to London, and we all three had a singular conversation on the subject; for Mr. Stenhausen was addicted to a species of mystical philosophy, and reasoned with a curious ingenuity on the circumstances that had so miraculously brought us together. Among other impressive remarks, he said to me in particular—

“ ‘Your part in this tragedy is to discover the Prussian; for, although your friend has been so haunted by the thought of the skeleton, all the incidents that have thickened into evidence attach to you.’

“That evening I accompanied Adolph to the play; we had agreed to meet Mr. Stenhausen and his friend there, for the fearful work in which we were now all so manifestly fatal agents, united us as it were by enchantment. But it began to rain suddenly as we

were proceeding towards Drury-Lane, and we took refuge from the shower in Wynne's coffee-house, where we were scarcely seated, when Mr. Stenhausen and his friend also, from the same cause, joined us.

“ ‘This,’ said Mr. Stenhausen, ‘is providential,—it has come of some supernatural purpose that we are driven thus together. We are forbidden to approach the theatre to-night : let us spend the evening here.’

“ It was accordingly so resolved ; and having ordered wine, we sat down, exchanging few words, and looking with awe at each other.

“ In the course of an hour the rain abated, and we rose to go home, when the Prussian and the man from Toulon entered. All, by an inexplicable instinct, surrounded them. He looked astonished at our movement, and did not at first recognize me ; but, when he did, I saw him start, and his physiognomy instantly assumed that quivering emotion which I had noticed in the coach when I touched his remembrance of Toulon.

“ The friend of Mr. Stenhausen was the most self-collected ; he immediately ordered the

waiter to light us to a private room, and, turning to the Prussian, said, 'You, Sir, must be of our party.'

"The wretched man trembled; all presence of mind fled from him, and he followed the waiter as if fascinated without will.

"Before either of us spoke, the waiter who had placed the candles on the table, and had left the room, came back and announced that the Prussian was wanted by a gentleman below.

" 'Send him up,' said I, and the waiter did so; he was also a German, and by the freedom with which he addressed the Prussian, evidently an old friend.

" 'Frederick,' said he, without noticing any other in the room, 'I have received a letter from Frankfort, that has overwhelmed me with horror. On that same night in which you were so inexplicably carried away from the inn door, my brother was murdered, and clandestinely buried in the garden of the house where his remains have been found. The robbers and dogs which carried you away have been

all of one gang. They must have heard that he had those jewels on him for Vienna.'

" 'How is it known?' I exclaimed, 'that the remains were those of your brother.'

" 'He wore a brooch with a cipher on it, and that has been found; a gentleman is bringing it to me.'

" 'It is here,' said Mr. Stenhausen's friend, producing the ornament.

" 'There is some error,' cried the Frenchman, 'this gentleman comes from Toulon, I knew him there.'

" The German was about to reply, when the Prussian smiting his forehead, gave a loud groan, and fell into a chair, where for about a minute he covered his face with his hand, and then uttered in a slow and fearful voice,—

" 'I am the man!'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE longer we live, the more we see in the world and in human nature to make us pause and hesitate in our opinions. Truth itself appears to be of a fluctuating character, and though it may not be changed in substance, it alters in hue as we ourselves grow older, insomuch that not only sentiments, but actions in the course of a few years, seem to undergo remarkable transmutations.

“ Crimes bold and catching once, as old diseases,
Grow mild and vanish from the frame of man.”

The treason of one age becomes the virtue of another, and the heresy of the past the orthodoxy of the present.

The same law which produces this effect on the general system, operates upon individuals

in their respective spheres, and is so extensive in its influence, as to resemble that of gravitation in the material universe. Thus it frequently comes to pass, that without being sensible how much we have ourselves been changed by time and circumstances, we often express surprise at the alteration which our friends have apparently undergone. Besides this slow inevitable moral vegetation, if the expression may be used, we are subject to others as sudden and inexplicable as the mutations produced by spasms or palsy on our corporeal condition.

Something of this latter kind was observed to have taken place on our hero, from the evening which he spent with Franks and his friends at the tavern—so Franks described it; but we are inclined to think that it happened on the preceding evening, when he dined at Lord Errington's.

Although in one respect Franks was undoubtedly correct. Mr. Bremen's story of the Frankfort mystery produced on Buxton a powerful impression; he sat for some time manifestly deeply affected, and when he rose to bid the party good-night, which he did soon

after, there was an air of solemnity in his manner that attracted the observation of all present, and particularly of Bremen: Franks observed this, and as soon as they had arranged themselves again round the table, he said, addressing himself to Bremen,

“What think you of my friend?”

Bremen did not immediately reply, but glancing at the other two gentlemen, looked seriously at Franks, who, moved by his expressive silence, added, as if in anticipation of what he expected would be the answer,

“Undoubtedly he possesses great natural ability, but the shocks and rents which he has sustained in his fortunes, perplex his mind and disturb the harmony of his character. I never saw him before so little the master of himself as he has been to-night.”

Bremen, hearing his friend express himself so freely, felt less in awe of the other guests, who were strangers to him, and replied,

“Mr. Buxton is suffering from some more recent alarm than the disclosure of his true birth. There is too much astonishment about him to be owing to an event many days old; it

bears still the impress of a fresh impulse, from which he has not so far recovered as to be able to shake it off; but that the thing is improbable, I should apprehend that he has just been accessory to something that makes him shudder with remorse."

This refined conjecture was so characteristic of Bremen, that it did not surprise Franks, who immediately replied,

"You are probably right:" subjoining, "Howard, his father, has this morning been with him; at first, when Buxton found how much the man had participated in the fatal fraud, he resolved never to regard him as a parent, but he has since wonderfully relented, and I have some reason to hope that he no longer intends to persevere in the alienation."

"It may be so," said Bremen, "but his mind seems to me this morning not under the influence of kindly feelings, on the contrary, it was full of superstitious dread; I marked his eyes fill with tears, while there was no other sign of sadness about him: for lack of a fitter term, I would call them prophetic, as if he

thrilled within the shadow of some omen or eclipse."

"He stands in awe of something that he considers very terrible," said Mr. Bradden, a German gentleman, who had spoken very little in the course of the evening, but to whom our hero appeared particularly interesting, and who had regarded him with an inquisitive vigilance. The remark struck Bremen, who immediately turned round and inquired why he thought so.

"I would," said Bremen, "have almost expressed the same opinion, but I could not observe that he alluded even in his casual remarks to the apprehension of any new misfortune."

"True," said Bradden; "but he once, when you were speaking, uttered involuntarily to himself 'God help me!' which evidently implied a consciousness of being either defenceless or in danger, and therefore I infer that he stands in some predicament which exposes him to peril."

Franks admired his metaphysical ingenuity, and Mr. Arundale, the Englishman, looked as if it pertained to something more recondite than

was dreamed of in his philosophy ; but Bremen, who had still a little of the leaven of his college in him, controverted the notion of Bradden, and the conversation in consequence diverged into a discussion respecting the mode of thinking, and the principles by which men are naturally governed in their reasoning, in despite of all academical dogmas.

But when the party rose to separate, and had reached the street, Bremen touched Franks emphatically on the arm, and requesting their two friends to walk on before, whispered,

“ Has your friend Buxton any other cause of distress than those which belong immediately to the fraud by which he has been so overwhelmed.”

“ I believe not,” replied Franks ; “ and even his misfortune has lately been greatly mitigated by the generosity of an old gentleman ; but a lady to whom he is attached is ill, and suspected of being in great danger.”

Bremen then said ; “ It is very curious, but so far from being in awe, as Bradden thinks, of any thing or person, I am persuaded that he fears he has or will have the power to exercise a

vengeance that he would recede from ; he stands in awe only of himself :—What can it be ? Pray who is the old gentleman to whom he has become so suddenly obliged ?”

Franks at this question immediately contrasted the story, which his father had told him of Mr. Hyams, with the other version which he had received from Buxton, and with that constitutional quickness which sometimes betrayed him into rash suspicions, he hastily concluded that there was more mystery in the tale than had yet been divulged, and under this impression, without, however, saying what he thought, he bade his friends good-night.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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